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ANTHONY DANIELS
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Jamie Lindsay, left, and Kari Robinson at Chinook Centre.
JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

No need for speed

TRANSPORTATION

Police suggest cycle track speed limit

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Speed demons on the city's cycle track have a CPS member pushing for a posted limit for those using the two-wheeled transportation.

Downtown cycle track users must follow all traffic laws and share the same 50 km/h speed limit as the vehicles beside them.

And although it's tough to imagine a bike zipping by at 50 clicks, Sgt. Katrina O'Reilly, who liaises with the city cycle track committee, said they've clocked cyclists as fast as 38 kilometres per hour.

"Going 38 kilometres per hour, it's going to be really difficult for them to stop suddenly, or if a car were to turn in front of them they wouldn't really be able to react appropriately," O'Reilly said.

The city's bike paths have posted speed limits of 20 kilometres because they're shared by both pedestrians, skateboarders and other users.

Pooja Thakore, a spokesperson with the city, said it's something CPS and animal and bylaw services brought up and the city will be doing a safety audit as part of the pilot. "Right now we're focusing on monitoring and adjustments along the network, but once we have the results ... we'll share those with CPS," she said.

Agustin Louro, president with Bike Calgary, said he hasn't heard concerns from members.

"The city is not due to publish their collision data until the end of the pilot — which is about a year from now. So I would be hesitant to make changes like that in the absence of evidence."

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Mandatory indigenous course on target at MRU

EDUCATION

University of Calgary not certain if it will follow suit

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Mount Royal University is hoping to have all-new undergraduate students take at least one mandatory indigenous studies course by 2018.

The decision is a result of the university's strategic plan, unveiled in June.

John Fischer, director of MRU's Iniskim Centre, said students will be required to have one three-credit class, or other program, that specializes in indigenous content.

"I think it's critical we do this for a number of reasons," he said. "It fills a void in the education of students, whether they're indigenous or non-indigenous."

On Thursday, both the University of Winnipeg and Lakehead University in Thunder Bay unveiled a plan that requires students to have at least one indigenous studies course in order to graduate.

There are a swath of courses that those universities will offer, much as MRU plans to do, Fischer said.

He said Mount Royal has yet to evaluate its current indigenous-themed courses to see which would satisfy graduation requirements.

"It's not a simple matter of saying, 'This is the only course required,'" he said.

"It has to build an understanding of the indigenous community."

The University of Calgary has been a bit behind when it comes to requiring students to take at least one indigenous studies course.

The university doesn't have anything planned regarding mandatory indigenous courses, though it's developing an strategy that could result at least one mandatory indigenous class.

"The University of Calgary is embarking on a comprehensive aboriginal strategy in 2016 and will await outcomes and recommendations that may come out of that work," said Dru Marshall, provost and vice president academic, in an email.

As for the U of W and Lakeland, students were the key drivers to see those universities implement an indigenous studies requirement.

Romy Garrido, students' union (SU) vice-president external affairs at the U of C, said SU hasn't begun to consult students about the issue.

"We are open to asking students, of course," she said.

"And if there is an appetite for mandatory courses, we'd be open to advocating that. It's our job."

Erik Queenan, president of the Students' Association at Mount Royal University, said he'll ensure administration implements the requirements.

"It's a really good opportunity for students to learn more about aboriginal history in Canada," he said.

Fischer said he's happy to see many universities follow through with the requirement.

"For me, it's one more checkmark for our future as Canadians," he said.

Student Dwight Farahat and John Fischer, director of the Iniskim Centre. JENNIFER FRIESEN/METRO

> **I think it's critical we do this ... it fills a void in the education of students, whether they're indigenous or non-indigenous.**
> John Fischer, director of MRU's Iniskim Centre

CITY HALL

Building near rails discussed

Brodie Thomas
Metro | Calgary

They'll be working on the railroad at city council Friday.

Or at least, they'll be talking about the railroad — and how the city should regulate construction close to the tracks.

The matter will be discussed in camera, but Coun. Evan Woolley said the discussion revolves around the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) guidelines for development near tracks.

"We need to give some direction on development around our CP lines," he said.

Coun. Shane Keating said in the past, the FCM guidelines have been mistaken as actual regulations, which they are not.

He worries the FCM's best practice put too much onus on landowners near the tracks.

"It does not in any way shape or form state that as a land owner — the railroads — they should be taking complete responsibility to make sure their trains don't leave the property," said Keating.

He notes that if railroads simply slowed trains down in developed areas, there would be fewer risks around the transportation of dangerous goods.

The FCM suggests residential building setbacks of 30 metres from a main line, or 15 metres from a branch line.

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Male massage therapist charged with sex assault

CRIME

Brad McLellan is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 12

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

A local registered massage therapist whose resume includes Hockey Canada and the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Games has been charged with sexual assault.

On Dec. 11, a 25-year-old woman attended a sports therapy massage appointment at a clinic located at 520 - 3 Avenue SW. During the massage, the male massage therapist allegedly sexually assaulted her.

"It's very serious," said Det. Sarah Roe of the CPS Sex Crimes Unit.

"In this particular incident the sexual assault went beyond what might be considered groping."

Brad McLellan, a registered massage therapist, has been arrested after he allegedly assaulted a client. CONTRIBUTED

Brad McLellan, a registered massage therapist in Calgary, was arrested Dec. 14 and has since been charged with sexual assault. He is scheduled to appear in court Feb. 12.

According to a police spokesperson, there is no regulatory body for massage therapy licensing in Alberta, however the Natural Health Practitioners of Canada insured McLellan.

Roe said CPS has no power to prevent him from working as a massage therapist for the time being.

"McLellan was contracted by and rented a space at Centennial Wellness Clinic at the time of the alleged assault," she said.

"The clinic has been very cooperative with CPS throughout the investigation."

Roe said CPS encourages all victims of sexual assault to report it to police.

"Certainly with sex crimes we take all precautions necessary in conducting investigations," she said.

Anyone with further information on this case can call the CPS non-emergency line at 403-266-1234, or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477.

RESPONSE TIMES

AHS announces new ambulance standards

Ryan Tumilty
Metro | Edmonton

Alberta Health Services announced new ambulance response time targets Thursday, as part of a group of measurements designed to give people more confidence in the system.

As Metro first reported Tuesday, the new target for an ambulance's arrival on scene will be 12 minutes in urban areas, 90 per cent of time. When the city of Edmonton ran the service in 2009, the standard response time was nine minutes, 90 per cent of the time. Rural communities can expect slower ambulance response times.

Dale Weiss, AHS's northern executive director for emergency medical services, said when the organization first started investigating targets they found many different measures existed — and that many services weren't hitting benchmarks.

"We looked at [targets] in Alberta," he said. "Targets and what they were performing at are two different things."

Weiss said the targets AHS has established are not a reflection of the response times the system was hitting in the past, but instead the result of aspirational goals.

"When we first started talking about this we were considering targets that we had not met yet," he said. Beyond response time, AHS now plans to publicly report on time taken to dispatch a call, patient satisfaction and time ambulances spend waiting to transfer patients in hospitals. Weiss said that's a major barrier they hope to fix.

"There are not any paramedics that want to be waiting in hospitals," he said.

The new standard for ambulance waits is 90 minutes, 90 per cent of the time. Weiss said that's achievable, but it will take work at every local hospital.

> **"Targets and what they were performing at are two different things."**
> Dale Weiss

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DIVERSITY

Mayor encourages hiring newcomers

As Syrian refugees begin to settle in the city, Mayor Naheed Nenshi sent a reminder to business owners on Wednesday.

"(Make) sure when you're hiring people that you get rid of those dirty words 'Canadian experience' from your hiring criteria – that you ensure you're giving people that fair shake," said the mayor during his address to the chamber of commerce.

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society CEO Fariborz Birjandian said on the whole, businesses in this city are good about hiring new Canadians.

"We have a great business community – they are quite receptive to newcomers," he said.

Part of that stems from when the economy was booming. Employers had no choice but to focus on skills.

Birjandian said even now, with unemployment at six per cent, the opportunities are out there.

"It's not as bad as people think, actually," he said. "Entry level jobs, there are still a lot available. And that's what most refugees would look for in the beginning."

Birjandian said new Canadians have a lot of resources they can tap into once they arrive, especially refugees.

But more importantly, he said the companies are willing to hire.

"Most companies have established that diversity is a good thing – I wouldn't say that 20 years ago," he said.

Although the mayor was reminding businesses to diversify their workforce, a Metro story earlier this year found the City of Calgary doesn't accurately track diversity among its 20,000-plus employees, though it is working on a solution.

BRODIE THOMAS/METRO

University of Calgary's campus. COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

U of C board taking flak

POST-SECONDARY

Transparency concerns after change in proceedings

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

After recent changes to the University of Calgary Board of Governors proceedings, the faculty association is raising questions over transparency.

The University of Calgary has recently stopped distributing materials to both the Students' Union and The University of Calgary Faculty Association (TUCFA) for open board sessions after a review of their current process — which they say is in line with "practices of a majority of Canadian post-secondary institutions surveyed."

> **What we're getting now is just a sheet of paper.**
> Sandra Hoenle

Now, members of the public can look at agendas posted online before meetings, but have no access to the details of motions coming forward. Those, once approved, can be requested after board meeting.

Sandra Hoenle, president of the faculty association, said members of the board used to be able to go to groups with information packages to discuss the contents and make informed decisions.

"What we're getting now is just a sheet of paper that lists all the agenda items. There's all these things coming forward for approval, but there's no information about any of the items," Hoenle said. "This changed to (a situation of) not providing any materials very recently, within the last month or so."

The University of Calgary said it's committed to excellent governance. In a written statement they outlined that this commitment includes being accountable, transparent and current.

"Board packages are prepared for board members to assist them to make informed and independent decisions in fulfillment of their duties to the university," read a statement from the university.

The university provided an internal audit of other university practices, among the listed were the University of Alberta and the University of Lethbridge.

Metro contacted both to get an idea of their process, as the U of C audit listed both as not providing a package of materials.

The University of Lethbridge said they send the agenda "complete with supporting materials," to the faculty association. They also noted individuals may request these materials if they so choose.

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Kenna Burima, Chris Nevile, and Becky Salmond will sing and spread positive message about heathy relationships at this year's Carol of the Belles. JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

Music contains message

CAROL OF THE BELLES

Artists to sing about healthy relationships, consent, more

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

It's all about duets and consent at this year's Carol of the Belles.

The Christmas spectacle — a fundraiser for the Calgary Sexual WiseGuyz program — will feature some of the city's best artists, but also shed light on violence against women, misogyny, and compassionate community support.

The WiseGuyz program gives junior high boys tools to engage in healthy relationships, and helps them understand the connection between masculinity and male norms.

For Kenna Burima, who created the event, the fundraiser is meant to talk about serious issues in a positive way.

"We all think it's important to be having these conversations," she said. "So how do we have them as a group and have them be proactive? I think that's what Carol of the Belles does.

Pam Krause, president and CEO with the Calgary Sexual Health Centre, said the theme of duets is to teach people about healthy relationships.

"We're so grateful to the Carol of the Belles organizers for their continued support of the Calgary Sexual Health Centre," Krause said.

The event will be on Saturday from 2 - 5 p.m. at the Mamdani Opera Centre, 1315 7 Street SW.

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Violin Narooz has seen first-hand the struggles that affect Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

JORDAN

Refugee camp makes Canadian feel lucky

It was a pillow that made Violin Narooz realize how lucky she is to live in Canada.

Narooz, a financial assistant at the University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine, recently returned from Marfraq, Jordan, where she helped Syrian refugees in the city by volunteering with Samaritan's Purse.

"It was a very, very, very meaningful experience," she said. "You go wanting to help someone, and I came back changed in a positive way."

The pillow incident occurred when a group of volunteers made rounds handing out supplies to numerous homes outside the city's main refugee camp.

One home, in particular, only had five extremely thin and small mattress, she said. Ten people were living in the crowded space, and there weren't enough pillows to go around.

"They had nothing," Narooz said. "The mother explained to me that two kids sleep on a mattress. They were very thin and not wide enough."

Narooz then returned to the truck to fetch five more mattress and an armful of pillows for the family.

Upon arrival, the mom was in tears.

"She looked at me with tears in her eyes," Narooz said. "She said (the family) had been there for one and a half years. She said, 'It's the first time my kids won't fight over a pillow.'"

The two women then hugged each other, and time felt as if it was frozen, Narooz added.

"Internally, I was in shock," she said. "Who thinks of their pillow when they go to bed? That was huge for me — it made me very mindful of the little blessings I have in my life."

In fact, Narooz was raised in Jordan, moving to Canada with her family 15 years ago.

She said she was embraced by Canada and hopes people shed any fear they may have about Syrians entering the country.

"There is room to love your neighbour and room to get to know them," she said. "I love Canada like nobody's business, and I think it's because I was accepted and loved just the way I am as an immigrant."

JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

> **She looked at me with tears in her eyes. She said (the family) had been there for one and a half years. She said, 'It's the first time my kids won't fight over a pillow.'**
> Violin Narooz

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Victims fear calling police: Study

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Thesis looks at why South Asian women don't reach out

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

South Asian women suffering from domestic abuse feel like they have few avenues to find safety — fear of being harassed by the police, or turned away by members of their community, make them reluctant to reach out for help.

Through interviews for her study, University of Calgary counsellor Priya Kharat learned that attitudes towards law enforcement in their home countries left women in Canada afraid to call authorities.

"In my thesis, I've given verbatim statements from participants such as, 'I would never involve the police. That's too high risk, because they harass you,'" Kharat explained "If you take some of the developing countries, the role of the police is so different. They may not have the concept of shelter or of the police coming to help a domestic violence case, because it's not done. It's supposed to be a private affair."

Counsellors at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association agree — and say that it can be a lengthy process to chip away at those stereotypes.

Family counsellor Bela Gupta said when women are reluctant to call the police she will sometimes call the non-emergency line for them, put the call on speakerphone, and explain the situation.

"We'll say we have this client who is very afraid because she's had bad experiences back home with the police," Gupta explained. If the client doesn't want to levy charges against her husband, officers may arrange to simply drop by and have a conversation with her.

"That's how they get her to slowly open up," Gupta said.

It can be a lengthy process. Gupta recalls an experience where a women called in, and Gupta referred her to a shelter. She did not go. Two months later, she called again, and this time agreed to go to the shelter — but only stayed for two months. It was an entire year after that she was finally able to leave her husband.

> **They may not have the concept ... of the police coming to help.**
> Priya Kharat

It's not only police mistrust — Kharat said immigrant women see obstacles with language, trying to figure out infrastructure in a foreign country, and even approaching other members of the community to help.

Sometimes there's a stigma attached to leaving your husband – and women may find themselves ostracized from the community, with no one willing to help them. CIWA counsellor Nadia Ramadan said it's important not to dismiss their worries — but slowly plant seeds of trust to help them out of a dangerous situation.

Nadia Ramadan, counsellor with the CIWA, said it can be a slow process getting immigrant women to open up and seek help with their situations. AARON CHATHA/METRO

TRANSPORTATION

UPass not among frozen transit fares, sees $5 hike

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Calgarians are rejoicing over the recent announcement that transit fares will be frozen for 2016 — but some students are wondering what gives as they face a $5 hike in their UPass fees.

According to Calgary Transit, the UPass fee isn't technically considered a transit fare — which is why when the city announced it would freeze costs UPass wasn't on the table. It's a fee negotiated between the post-secondary institutions and transit according to how many students go to each institution.

"The $5 increase honestly isn't too big of a deal, and I probably wouldn't have thought much of it if it hadn't coincided with the announcement from the city about freezing next year's transit fares," said Sahani Samarappuli.

She explained she received an email from the University of Calgary about an increase around the same time as the city announced its freeze.

"That said, an increase is an increase, and it's tough economic times all around. Especially if you're a full-time student. Every dollar counts."

Calgary Transit says the UPass fee isn't technically considered a transit fare. METRO FILE PHOTO

Neil McKendrick, coordinator of strategic transit planning, said the UPass price works out to about $32.50 per month — a pretty good deal for students.

"We're no longer covering our costs for delivering this service to those students," McKendrick said. "We've been increasing the price gradually over the last little while; the increase that will occur with the next semester was negotiated with the schools earlier this year ... it wasn't included in the amount council set aside to compensate Calgary Transit for the fare increase."

When the UPass was originally launched, Calgary Transit was able to recover costs because ridership among students was low. Now the ridership has gone up and the cost of the discounted pass will rise gradually to make up for lost revenue.

Connor Molineaux, a University of Calgary student, said for him it's not about the cash — he has $5 — it's about the optics.

"Students are the ones who are forgotten in this equation."

EMPLOYMENT

There are bumps, chances: Economist

Tim Querengesser
Metro | Edmonton

Alberta has oil and ATB Financial chief economist Todd Hirsch, and forever, it seems, the two shall be both friend and foe.

Hirsch published a blog earlier this week pointing out the 10 best things about Alberta's economy that weren't related to oil — for brevity, the main ones were green energy, strong universities, the province's mayors and a young, hungry demographic.

But Hirsch doesn't mince words on Alberta's economic state, which is tied to the price of oil.

He's "not optimistic" about it, he said, conceding oil is critical. "I think it's going to be a rough ride."

But Hirsch isn't pessimistic, either.

The reason, he said, is that oil often dominates Alberta's economy, making it near impossible for other sectors to gain a foothold.

For instance, the tech sector keeps showing promise in Alberta, but when oil's hot, it kills economic potential, pulling all people into it, he said.

As Hirsch said, tech startups, "can't hire a receptionist for $75,000 a year," during the booms.

For that reason, while he sees 2016 as a bumpy road, Hirsch said Alberta can at least continue to diversify during it.

"Now we have the opportunity to perhaps encourage other sectors to reexamine Alberta," he said. "We've got this young, educated population, fantastic infrastructure, great universities and available office space."

Premier Rachel Notley, seen in her office Thursday, says Alberta is in strong shape despite the current value of oil. KEVIN TUONG/METRO

Premier concerned by lost oil revenues

NATURAL RESOURCES

For every dollar below average, the province loses $170M

Ryan Tumilty
Metro | Edmonton

Despite a steep drop in oil prices this year, Premier Rachel Notley believes the province's budget is still in strong shape.

Oil, which was pegged at a yearly average of $50 per barrel in the October budget, was trading around $34 on Thursday and has not consistently traded above $50 since July.

Every dollar below the average the province lands at the end of the year costs Alberta $170 million in revenue.

But Notley said she hopes the early highs this year will balance out the recent lows.

"I don't think we are ultimately going to be that far off because the beginning of the year, the price was a lot higher. If you look at the average we are still pretty much on pace," she said.

The NDP projected a $6.1-billion deficit in its budget this year, but Finance Minister Joe Ceci said the government would watch oil closely and make adjustments if necessary.

> **We're working on different job creation incentives.**
> Rachel Notley

Notley said that remains the plan.

"Obviously, going forward we are going to have to keep an eye on what happens with the projections and adjust accordingly, but that's not surprising," she said. "Oil goes up and down and in any given day you're going to get two widely different projections."

She said her government also wants to find ways to ease the pain of the oil slide and get Albertans back to work.

"We're working on different job creation incentives. We have significantly upped our capital investment. We're engaging in a number of different economic diversification strategies. We are trying to pull as many levers as we can."

INCOME

Minimum wage hike would cost jobs: CFIB

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says it has obtained an internal NDP memo suggesting the province knows plans for more increases to the minimum wage could result in "significant job losses."

The CFIB says it obtained a briefing memo from the ministry of labour through a freedom of information request.

CFIB spokesman Richard Truscott says the memo tells a different story than the government has been saying. He says the province has been maintaining that hiking the minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2018 would create jobs, not kill them.

Labour Minister Lori Sigurdson released an emailed statement saying the province's analysis of "the potential impact of this year's increase ... found that there would not be negative economic consequences," adding the government believes those earning the least should be able to take care of their families.

However, Truscott says the internal briefing prepared for Sigurdson ahead of the October increase which took the minimum wage to $11.20 is less certain.

"At this point it is not fully known what the overall impact of this kind of upwards wage pressure would have on what is still an uncertain economy," says the memo, "but it is reasonable to assume that job loss and perhaps significant job loss is one realistic possibility."

The document has the Opposition Wildrose urging the premier to delay the increase.

"Whether it's the jump in the minimum wage, tax hikes, a new carbon tax, or royalty reviews, it's obvious the NDP give little to no thought on the economic consequences," Wildrose labour critic Grant Hunter says in a release. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Calgarian snow-clearing etiquette

IN DEFENCE OF
Mike Morrison

As an apartment dweller for most of my Calgary life, I've avoided things like utility bills, mowing the lawn and shovelling.

But earlier this year, we moved into a house and have been faced with these new tasks, with a varying level of success. I actually don't mind things like shovelling and mowing the lawn, and being pretty familiar with the City's Snow Angels program, I knew that moving into a house meant that I'd likely also be helping out my neighbours.

The campaign encourages Calgarians to clear snow and ice from the sidewalks of their neighbours who may be less able to do it themselves – particularly older adults and persons with disabilities.

> **You're faced with the question: How much sidewalk do I shovel?**

Having shovelled for a few months now, I honestly had no idea how stressful the Snow Angels program was. That's because as neighbours, every time it snows, you're faced with the question: How much sidewalk do I shovel?

Sure you could just do yours and head back inside. But isn't that kind of rude? I mean, you're already dressed for the weather, why not take the few extra minutes to help your neighbours out, even if they aren't seniors. Fine, so you do your neighbour's. But what about the other neighbours? So you do theirs, too. But now, what about the houses beside them? You're out, they're not. You already have the shovel in your hand, so before you know it, you're doing the whole block. No problem.

But what about the next time it snows? And this is where I really begin to stress out. What if my neighbour gets up and shovels their sidewalk, and does mine because they noticed that I did it last time. That's great, how nice! But now my other neighbour sees that my sidewalk is done and theirs isn't. Do they think I did it and that I'm mad at them? Perhaps they think that because they didn't say thank you, or send over cookies, I'm now refusing to do their sidewalk. In reality, I'm still in bed and I'm totally unaware of the impending World War III happening all over shoveling sidewalks.

How far are you shovelling walkways when the white stuff flies? METRO FILE

My friend recently told me that he's been doing his neighbours' sidewalks for six years and has never had the favour reciprocated. So does he shake it off and not worry about it? Or does he stop helping his neighbour out? Well, we know he'll never stop because we're Canadians, and we'd rather bury ourselves in 10 feet of snow than have someone think a negative thought about us. Still, it's a distressing situation. It's the principle of the whole thing.

On the east coast, the cities plow both the roads and the sidewalks, which likely explains why east coasters are known for being so jovial. They don't have to deal with neighbour/snow removal-related stress.

Since the city just barely plows Calgary's roads, I don't expect our sidewalks to get love any time soon. So I'll just keep shovelling as much as I can and hope for an early spring!

Piercing records

CHARITY

'Human Pin Cushion' ready to up his game

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

Matthew Menczyk said he is looking forward to beating their record this coming Tuesday. LUCIE EDWARDSON / METRO

Matthew Menczyk currently holds the world record for "Most Surgical Needle Piercings in One Session," but he's ready to better his record, and this time, in the name of a good cause.

Menczyk, who will be pierced by his friend Russ Foxx, said Inn From The Cold is a cause that is close to their hearts.

"We've both been in that situation and we've got a soft spot for homeless people," he said. "We would like to draw a lot of attention towards the issue."

Lynn Cox of Inn From The Cold said the group is pleased Menczyk and Foxx chose to promote their organization.

"They're helping to draw attention to the very critical needs we have over this holiday season," she said.

Foxx, who is from Vancouver, and Menczyk who is from Saskatchewan, said they're both looking forward to the challenge — taking place this coming Tuesday at Human Kanvas Tattoo, kicking off at 11 a.m..

"It's pushing ourselves," said Foxx, who expects the process to take 12 hours. "It's kind of an endurance thing, and we see it as a record that we totally can beat, but it will be very difficult to do."

Menczyk previously had 4,550 surgical needles pierced all over his body, setting the last record, and earning the title of "Human Pin Cushion" in Ripley's Believe It or Not.

"We want to try and get 8,400 this time," he said, adding that the experience gives him a rush of endorphins.

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Alberta Ballet on point for Xmas with its annual Nutcracker show

ARTS

Designer says masterpiece is as fresh as ever

Lisa Wilson
For Metro | Calgary

Zack Brown designed the spectacular sets and costumes for Alberta Ballet's beloved annual production of The Nutcracker. It runs until Dec. 24 at the Jubilee Auditorium. YIN YI/CONTRIBUTED

It wouldn't be Christmas without Alberta Ballet's annual production of The Nutcracker.

There are many reasons the family friendly extravaganza, which runs until Dec. 24 at the Jubilee Auditorium, continues to be a popular holiday tradition.

"First of all, I don't think audiences get sick of Tchaikovsky's score," said Zack Brown, who designed the show's spectacular sets and costumes.

"I still listen to The Nutcracker Suite myself. And the choreography is great. The 'snowflake scene' is beautiful and the second act with the different ethnic dances is also one of the highlights."

The story of a girl named Clara, who finds adventure when she follows her beloved wooden nutcracker doll into The Land of the Sweets on Christmas Eve, the ballet first premiered in Russia in 1892, but didn't become a holiday staple until the 1960s.

Brown says in order to create the magical world of The Nutcracker, he first had to sit down with choreographer Edward Stripe to understand Stripe's creative vision.

"I bounced ideas off him," recalled Brown, who first collaborated with Alberta Ballet six years ago on a new costume and set design, which the company has used since.

"He wasn't sure whether to set it in Germany or Russia, and I pushed for Russia because I love that style. Then it was just a matter of me putting things in front of him and him going yes or no."

Brown says the most important aspect to his costume designers was finding material that sparkled and shimmered, but was also lightweight and strong enough for the dancers to move freely in.

Alberta Ballet's production is the fourth Nutcracker Brown has designed and says he was thrilled with the final product.

"They did a great job," he said. "I always want to tweak (the costume and sets), but the company just affords to maintain it."

The 65-year-old designer started his career about 35 years ago after studying at the University of Notre Dame and Yale School of Drama.

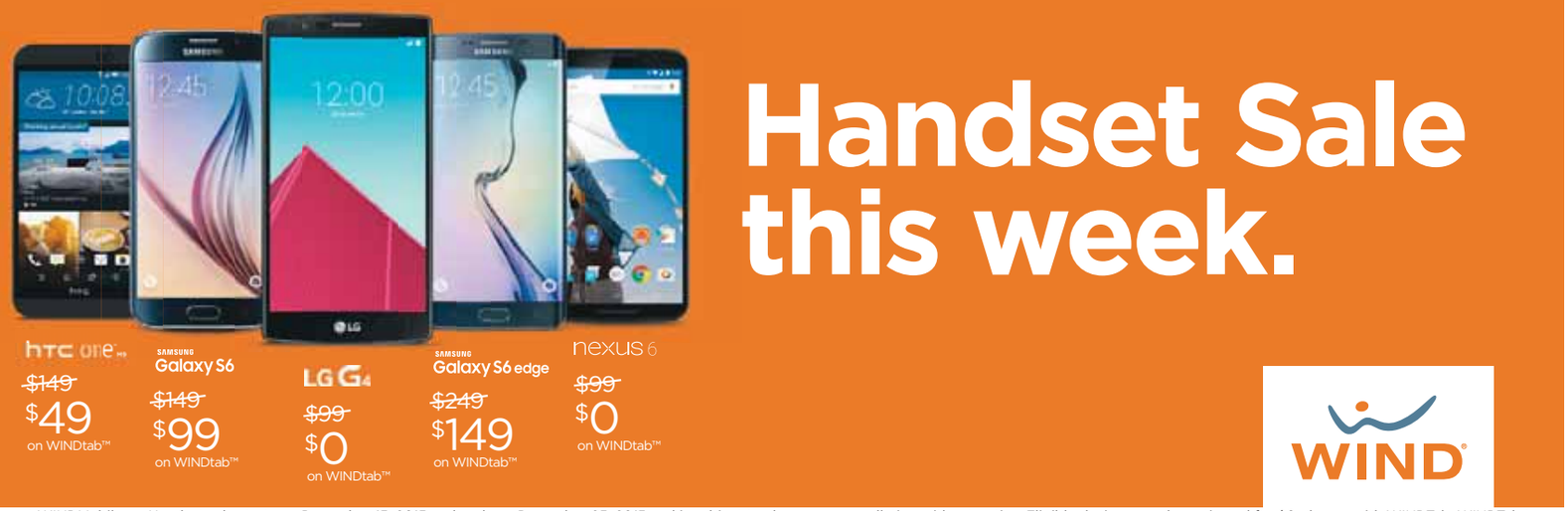
He has largely retired from designing sets and costumes and prefers to spend his days painting.

"I wouldn't want to be a designer starting out," admits Brown. "There's less money to be had and everything costs more. It's a very difficult business and if you're not suited to it, it's hard.

"But I love being in a costume shop and I love cooking up ideas ... If the right project comes along again, I'd probably be interested."

TICKETS

Grab a seat for spectacle
Tickets for Alberta Ballet's The Nutcracker are available through albertaballet.com or by calling 403-245-4549
METRO



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The Jingles bring their brand of musical Christmas cheer — and the ugliest of ugly sweaters — to the Blind Beggar Pub on Saturday. CONTRIBUTED

It's sweater party time

SCENE YYC

Jingles talk Christmas songs and ugly sweaters

Lisa Wilton
For Metro | Calgary

Calgary Christmas-themed trio The Jingles have a rather unique story of how they came to be.

According to drummer/kazooist Mickey Valenz, he and bandmates Dean Morrison and Lindsey Reid "walked through the seven levels of the Candy Cane forest, through the sea of swirly-twirly gum drops, and then ended up at the Kensington Pub," where they started joking about performing holiday tunes.

After a few glasses (and then a few more glasses) of Christmas cheer, they decided it was a good idea and have performed shows every December for the past eight years.

The band is throwing its Ugliest, Sweatiest, Ugly Sweater Party on Saturday at the Blind Beggar Pub with guests The Nova Scotiables, Grand Larsony and The North Sound. They also play an all-ages gig at Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar on Dec. 23.

Valenz tells Metro what makes a good Christmas song and the best ugly sweater:

Q: You have a Christmas album called The Jingles Rock Christmas. So many Christmas albums are released each year. How do you make yours stand out?

A: Each member of The Jingles has an eclectic array of influences, so the result of their collaborative writing sounds very unique. We mash together a witty sense of humour with impressive musicianship and a heavy dose of Christmas spirit. Also, rather than doing a Christmas album out of a contractual obligation, The Jingles do it for the sheer joy of it.

Q: When push comes to shove what's your all-time favourite Christmas recording?

A: I love Do You Hear What I Hear? by Copeland because the production value is really impressive. It's a very refreshing take on the age-old song and has great dynamics. Collectively, The Jingles tip their hat to Sufjan Stevens because with hundreds of Christmas songs, Sufjan has provided the most ambitious and interesting collection of Christmas recordings to date.

Q: What makes a good ugly sweater?

A: The best ugly sweaters can't just be ugly on purpose — that'd be too easy. No, the sweater has to have been made with care and attention and with an effort to try and make it look good — and then fail miserably. Look at any of the family Christmas photos from the '70s and '80s and you'll understand. While most people in 2015 wear ugly sweaters ironically, those family photos were dead serious. Those are the sweaters you want. Also, adding lots of shiny things is a must. Lights. Glitter. Ornaments. Tinsel. Make it flashy. This year, The Jingles dabbled in some fringe science and created quite the monstrosity.

WEEKEND EVENTS

Friday — HighKicksMas at Festival Hall
Calgary's loud, proud and bearded fuzz-rock duo, HighKicks, get into the Christmas spirit with an all-ages show. Local hip hop artist The Blue will also be on hand with his eight-piece band. And rounding out the evening are The Suburban Moms, a group of rockin' female musicians all under the age of 16. Tickets are $12 at the door.

Saturday — Carol of the Belles at Arrata Opera Centre
Hosted by Loose Moose Theatre favourites Renee Amber and Andrew Phung, Carol of the Belles is a fun night full of seasonal duets by some of some of Calgary's finest musicians, including Mariel Buckley, T. Buckley, Kiarra Albina, Kris Ellestad, Kenna Burima and Steve Fletcher. Funds raised go to support WiseGuyz.

Saturday — A Christmas Carol at the Max Bell Theatre
Theatre Calgary's annual production of Charles Dickens' much-loved tale of Christmas redemption stars local stage veteran Stephen Hair. Hair has performed the role of Ebenezer Scrooge each year for more than 20 years.

Sunday — Zoo Lights at The Calgary Zoo
The Calgary Zoo is transformed into a beautiful winter wonderland thanks to 200 displays consisting of more than 1.5 million lights. There are four activity zones to keep kids occupied while parents take advantage of the romantic light displays and crackling fire pits around the zoo.
LISA WILTON/ METRO

Cary Shennan began making rosemary potato pizza after being shown the ropes by an Italian chef outside of Rome.
JENNIFER FRIESEN

Perfect pizza for friends, family

THAT'S AMORE

Roman food romance helps bring everyone together

Jennifer Friesen

In a tiny village on outskirts of Rome, Cary Shennan and his fiancée uncovered a recipe that has never left their memories.

Three years ago, the couple walked into an Italian chef's home, were poured a copious amount of wine, and then taught how to make pasta and rosemary potato pizza from scratch.

"They didn't have the recipe for the pizza written down or anything," he said. "They said we just had to remember it."

And that they did — much to the delight of their friends and family.

The pizza has become a staple for whenever the two have guests over. During his sister's wedding, every generation of Shennan's (admittedly large) family met in his hometown of Spruce Grove.

Shennan and his fiancée opted to teach the family how to make the pizza, and the entire family cohered in the kitchen, making the meal together.

It's a simple and affordable dish, with crispy, olive-oil doused crust, and Shennan said it's the perfect choice for a holiday gathering — adding that he has every intention of making it again this Christmas.

"It's a way to get everyone in the kitchen," he said. "It brings everyone together, because we're teaching them, so everyone can take part in making it — and eating it."

ROSEMARY POTATO PIZZA

INGREDIENTS

3 ½ cups of flour
2 potatoes
1 litre of cold sparkling water (may need more)
Salt and pepper to taste
Fresh rosemary
½ cup olive oil
Fresh shredded Romano or Parmesan cheese (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Pre-heat oven to 420 degrees.
2. Pour majority of olive oil in two baking trays and spread until covered.
3. Cut potatoes into thin slices, using a mandolin or vegetable peeler.
4. Pour flour, a splash of the remaining olive oil and sprinkle of salt into large mixing bowl.
5. Mix in sparkling water and more flour until consistency is like watery crepe batter.
6. Pour batter into the baking trays. Place potato slices onto the batter, sprinkle with salt, pepper and the last of the olive oil.
7. Bake for 10 minutes. Then top with rosemary sprigs and shaved Parmesan or Romano.
8. Bake for another 5-10 minutes, until the bottom of the pizza is browned and slightly crispy.
9. Remove from oven and slice into squares.

CARY'S TIPS

1. "Use high-quality, first cold pressed olive oil, because the acidity is really high in regular olive oil, which doesn't taste nearly as good."
2. "Add whatever you want for toppings. Tomatoes can make it a little soggy, but they work if you slice them really thin."
3. "Have it with lots of wine. Chianti is the best."

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P-2011A • 151,000 KM • SAT RADIO • KEYLESS ENTRY

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IN BRIEF

Stoney Nakoda assault victim dies in hospital

A 28-year-old Stoney Nakoda Nation man has died after a fight that happened Wednesday.

Cochrane RCMP say two men had been celebrating earlier in the evening and later had a disagreement.

Alberta Emergency Medical Services attended and the victim was transported via STARS Air Ambulance to hospital in Calgary. The victim has since died.

An autopsy was scheduled for Friday morning at the Medical Examiner's Office in Calgary. The investigation is continuing with the assistance of the RCMP Serious Crimes Branch. METRO STAFF

'Wait and see' policy over marijuana in liquor stores

After strong words from Kathleen Wynne, premier of Ontario, about the possibility of carrying pot in liquor stores Rachel Notley said Alberta is taking a wait-and-see approach.

"I think that is an issue that we will wait to see the progress that the federal government makes on it," she told Metro Thursday. "When we start to see it being close to an issue we have to manage then we will focus our resources."

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission said they have expertise to handle controlled substances, but that in an open market, where the government doesn't operate stores, it's still not clear what could happen with marijuana sales.

"We have a lot of issues that are in front of us right now in Alberta, so that's where we are going to dedicate our time to," Notley said. METRO STAFF

Local buskers such as Kyle Green, above, could benefit from the revamped online presence proposed by the city. METRO FILE PHOTO

City is ready to turn up buskers' volume

ARTS

With 2016 key, program is expected to be rolled out soon

Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

After a summer of gathering information, speaking to artists and engaging stakeholders draws to a close, the city is sitting down to tinker with its busker pilot project.

Changes are coming for street artists, but the city remains tight-lipped about the specifics — except that there may be a revamped online presence for buskers in Calgary.

The City of Calgary is poring over a report of recommendations from their busking consultant Matt Masters after he finished up his engagement stint in October.

"We're in that process now of working with our stakeholders to identify what's come forward, what we think that we can actually roll out in 2016," said Teresa Byrne, cultural superintendent of festivals and events. "We don't feel like there's a need for a lot of change, we're just finding a way to assist them."

> **"It's about showing that they're a talent to nurture."**
> Teresa Byrne

The city is hoping to elevate the artistry of busking in Calgary and part of that may be engaging citizens through communication platforms, like a website, where people can see different artist profiles and get to know the buskers more intimately.

"We can start profiling some of the great talent that we have here," Byrne said. "It's about showing that they're a talent that we want to nurture in our city, because that's what makes a great city."

On means like Twitter and Facebook, the city's hoping the public can help spread the word about their favourite buskers, and performers can use social media to let the public know where they will be.

Byrne said it's very important the city's pilot rolls out in 2016 because for Calgary it's the year of music, when the city will be welcoming the Junos, along with talented artists from the world stage.

"People need to stay tuned for January as the pilot starts to roll out," she said.

TODDLER DEATH

Anger over jail sentence

A man who crashed his SUV into an Edmonton restaurant patio, killing a young boy, has been sentenced to four months in jail.

Richard Suter, a 65-year-old retired businessman, had pleaded guilty to failing to provide a breath sample in a death — a relatively new criminal offence that carries a maximum life sentence. Provincial court Judge Larry Anderson ruled Thursday that witnesses wrongly assumed Suter was drunk after his vehicle plowed into the patio in May 2013.

"As tragic as the consequences have been, this collision was an accident caused by a non-impaired driving error," Anderson said. The judge further took into account that Suter and his family have been subject to "extreme vitriol, public scorn and threats ... as well as violent vigilante actions" since the crash.

Suter was abducted from his home by three masked men and had a thumb cut off.

Court heard that two-year-old Geo Mounsef had been having dinner with his parents and baby brother at Ric's Grill to celebrate his successful potty training.

Police originally charged Suter with impaired driving causing death, as witnesses said he smelled of alcohol, was stumbling and slurring his words. But court also heard from other witnesses who believed he was sober.

Supporters of the boy's family packed the courtroom for the decision, and some shouted at Suter as sheriffs led him away.

"It's beyond insulting," Geo's father, George Mounsef, later said outside court. "Four months is a joke."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Knocking down walls to find holiday spirit

ADVENTURE BOOK

Children's tale aims to realize the 'magic' of Christmas

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Jace Jax said he gets his storybook ideas from a girl he once raised.

In fact, if it weren't for Halloween, his latest book — A Christmas Adventure: Young Mikey Meere — probably wouldn't have happened.

It began when he took the little girl trick-or-treating.

"Halloween was terrifying for her," Jax said. "She was scared of everything that popped out. She didn't cry, but was on the verge of tears all night."

So he wrote a story to tell her she shouldn't be scared.

Jace Jax's new book is themed around the real meaning of Christmas. JEREMY SIMES/FOR METRO

"It kind of grew from there," he said. "I guess you could say the spirit of her lives on in this book."

A Christmas Adventure follows Mikey Meere, a young boy who notices there's no cheer in Kidsburgh. He senses something is wrong, so he ventures outside town to find where that cheer could be.

He stumbles into a wall and, as it turns out, someone had built a wall around town, keeping the spirit of Christmas out.

"He has to save Christmas," Jax said. "It's all about preserving that magic."

The illustrations have a cartoon-y vibe to them, he said. In fact, there's also a video rendition of the book, if you don't feel like flipping through pages.

Jax, who's also a filmmaker, said he's more proud of the book than any film he's made in the past.

"In our commercial society, we tend to forget what the real value of Christmas is," he said. "It's supposed to be a giving holiday, but it's somewhat become a greedy holiday, so I hope it lets us realize that magic."

BUY ONLINE

The book can be purchased at foodimpact.ca.

DEFAMATION CASE

'Scud Stud' trial comes to a close

A defamation case pitting a media giant against a former journalist who earned his stripes dodging Scud missile blasts concluded Thursday with the plaintiff claiming he was the victim of a hit piece and the publisher arguing it had the latitude to print what it did.

A lawyer for Arthur Kent argued a column critical of the former journalist's campaign for public office used trumped-up language designed to mock and ridicule.

But a lawyer for Postmedia argued its former columnist, Don Martin, was allowed to express his point of view and didn't act maliciously in doing so.

"I didn't hear any evidence about an agenda to harm anybody and there's certainly no evidence Mr. Martin was a participant in any of it," lawyer Scott Watson told Justice Jo'Anne Strekaf.

For four weeks, Strekaf heard from witnesses in the long-running lawsuit Kent filed against Postmedia, the National Post and Martin, who is now a host with CTV.

At its heart is an article Martin wrote that ran while Kent was seeking a seat for the Progressive Conservatives in the 2008 Alberta election.

Kent, who got the nickname "Scud Stud" while reporting for NBC during the Persian Gulf war, was a star candidate for the Tories, but was on the record as disagreeing with some of the party's policies, particularly its plans for a royalty review.

Martin's column painted Kent as an out-of-control egomaniac who had alienated party staff. The column used unnamed sources and didn't include comment from Kent. THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **"I didn't hear any evidence about an agenda to harm anybody and there's certainly no evidence Mr. Martin was a participant in any of it.** Lawyer Scott Watson

Connecting people with local business

SOCIAL MEDIA

GetAssist community has grown to 1,700 pages

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

Bruce Fikowski, creator of GetAssist, says the platform was beta tested in Olds, Alta. — where residents were quick to jump on board. AARON CHATHA/METRO

A new Calgary social network is connecting Calgarians with micro businesses and small service providers looking for work — everything from painters, plumbers and electricians to professionals who share hobbies such as photography and writing.

GetAssist launched at the end of October, designed around creating small public and private communities centred around organizations and topics.

Users create a profile, then can create or join existing communities, which can be private or public, and centred around social aspects or business.

"Being a small business guy and being busy, and my wife was busy, I found if I wanted to get things done around the house, at work, finding people was tough," said the creator of GetAssist, Bruce Fikowski.

Fikowski said Calgary has 56,000 micro and small service providers — but this generation's biggest communication tool, social media, wasn't doing enough to connect them with people who needed their services. He hopes his website will fill that gap.

"I watched someone make a request for a painter," he recalled. "Three minutes later, he was connected, someone got back to him. That's what we call purposeful social media."

He said users have already created 1,700 community pages. He's seen the company grow as a result. In four weeks, his staff has increased from five people to 19.

For more, visit getassist.com.

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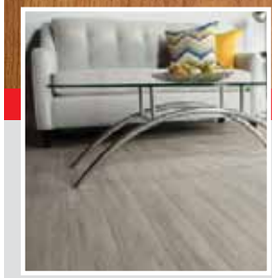

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‘No pressing problem’

POLITICS

Trudeau says there’s no need to open Constitution

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks with reporters in Ottawa on Wednesday.
PATRICK DOYLE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Justin Trudeau says there is no pressing problem facing the country that can only be resolved by opening the Constitution — a laborious, time-consuming road the new prime minister has no intention of going down.

That includes the fact that Quebec has never formally signed onto the Constitution, which was patriated in 1982 with a charter of rights by Trudeau’s father, Pierre, over the objections of the province’s then-separatist government.

“What I ask now to anyone who offers to open the Constitution, or says we should open the Constitution, is: what concrete problem are we trying to solve that is unsolvable without opening the Constitution?” Trudeau said during a 75-minute sit-down with the Ottawa bureau of The Canadian Press.

“I’d rather be talking about climate change and energy issues and job creation and training and health care and all these things that will make a concrete difference in people’s lives.”

Trudeau scoffed at a suggestion that Quebec’s continued refusal to sign the Constitution is a major problem.

“Which articulates itself how?” he asked rhetorically.

Some Quebecers will always complain that Quebec is excluded from the Constitution, Trudeau acknowledged. But the Constitution does apply to the province and nothing in it has limited Quebec’s ability to deliver health care or education or take action on the issues that matter most to Quebecers, he said.

As well, he said Quebecers are among those who value the charter of rights most highly.

Moreover, Trudeau asserted that the Oct. 19 federal election showed, for the first time in three decades, that Quebecers want to re-engage and play a role in the governance of the country.

“More than half the MPs elected in Quebec are from the governing party. That is an indication that Quebecers are not excluded from government or feeling excluded from Canada.”

THE CANADIAN PRESS

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

Documents reveal Bill C-27 options

The Canadian government considered punishing First Nations who refused to comply with controversial financial transparency legislation by putting someone else in control of their books, according to newly released documents.

The Toronto Star obtained a memo prepared for former aboriginal affairs minister Bernard Valcourt in February — released in response to an access-to-information request — recommending options for dealing with First Nations that had not yet complied with the First Nations Financial Transparency Act (Bill C-27).

The law, brought in by the previous Conservative government, requires First Nations to submit financial documents, including audited financial statements and the salaries and expenses of chiefs and band councilors, to be published on the Indigenous and Northern Affairs website.

The partially redacted memo at one point discusses the idea of placing non-compliant First Nations under third-party management, which means a private-sector consultant — whose salary must be covered by the First Nation — would take over the administration of money associated with departmentally funded programs and services.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Killer whale population experiencing baby boom

The endangered killer whale population off British Columbia’s coast is experiencing a baby boom.

Scientists say an eighth calf has been born to the so-called J-pod of southern resident killer whales that’s been growing over the past year.

The Washington State-based Center for Whale Research says a suspected new baby was spotted on Dec. 1 near San Juan Island, but only confirmed the new addition after another sighting on Wednesday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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New plan for communism memorial

POLITICS

Fresh location, smaller budget and a redesign after troubles

Michael Woods
Metro | Ottawa

It's back to the drawing board for the controversial memorial to the victims of communism, — a new location, a new design and a smaller budget.

On Thursday, the federal government squashed their predecessors' much-maligned plan to build the memorial on land southwest of the Supreme Court building in Ottawa.

That location was opposed by Ottawa's city council, community and architectural groups and Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin.

Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly said the memorial will instead be built at the Garden of the Provinces and Territories.

Joly said she consulted more than 30 people and there was consensus that the memorial should be moved there.

"It is a place clearly accessible to residents and visitors," she said. The design of the memorial, which has also come under criticism, will be scrapped.

Joly said a new design competition will be launched in the new year, with a view to completing the memorial by 2018.

The planned $5.5-million budget is also no more, but Joly said the federal government is still helping to fund it, with contributions capped at $1.5 million, half of the new cost.

Minister of Canadian Heritage Mélanie Joly ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Trudeau unlikely to pressure Saudis

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has no "immediate plans" to call Saudi Arabian authorities to ask for the liberation of jailed blogger Raif Badawi.

In a year-end interview with The Canadian Press on Wednesday, Trudeau said he won't pick up the phone right now on behalf of Badawi, who was sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in jail for his criticism of Saudi clerics. "It's not in my immediate plans," he said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Dion raised the matter with his Saudi counterpart, Adel Al Jubeir, when they met in Ottawa on Thursday. They discussed the state of human rights in Saudi Arabia as well as Badawi's case, where Dion reiterated a request for clemency.

"Raif Badawi has a family who are here in Canada, which gives a certain connection," Trudeau said. "It's a humanitarian case on which we continue to express ourselves in a clear fashion."

Trudeau's remarks came despite the fact that when he was opposition leader some of his MPs, including Dion, called on then-prime minister Stephen Harper to personally ask the Saudi king to release Badawi.

Dion raised the issue in the House of Commons on January 26, asking "Will Prime Minister (Harper) intercede himself directly with the new Saudi king, as Mr. Badawi's wife is begging him?"

Badawi is not a Canadian citizen but his wife and three children live in Sherbrooke, Que.

He was arrested in 2012, convicted in 2014 and received 50 of the 1,000 lashes in January of this year during a public flogging.

His imprisonment has drawn widespread condemnation both internationally and in Canada. Quebec lawmakers unanimously adopted a motion in February calling for his immediate release, vowing to expedite his immigration case should he be allowed to leave Saudi Arabia.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ensaf Haidar, wife of jailed Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, shows a portrait of her husband. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Scott becomes first to test new e-democracy rules
Craig Scott, a former New Democrat MP, has started an online petition to the House of Commons demanding a judicial inquiry into the alleged torture of prisoners during the Afghan war. The petition process went digital last month. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Montreal teen is first found guilty of new terror law
The prosecution says a Montreal-area teen, who cannot be named, has become the first person in Canada to be found guilty of attempting to leave the country to participate in terrorism-related activities. The charge was introduced in 2013. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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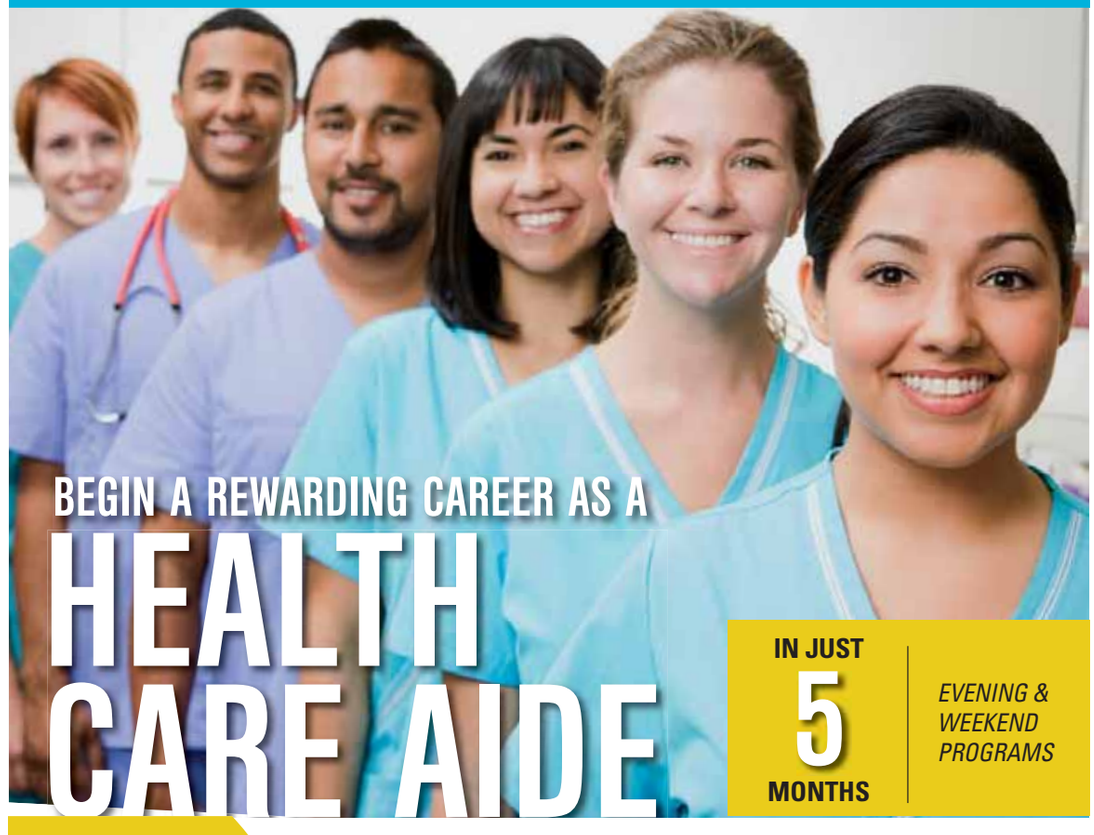

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Individuals of value

SOCIAL MEDIA

Campaign to highlight migrants' contributions

Migrants from around the world are sharing their life stories in a unique "I am a Migrant" campaign, launched by the International Organization of Migration to remind the world of the value of migrants.

Hundreds of people — including a Somali woman who moved to Canada to go to university, a French woman in Georgia and a Congolese artist in Mauritania — are participating in the global social media campaign, posting their profiles and photos on the website iamamigrant.org.

"We know from economic reports the incredible contributions migrants make. But it is easy to forget that," said Leonard Doyle, IOM spokesman. "We have to remind ourselves the world is a living mosaic and that makes it much richer."

The campaign comes at a time when the news has been focused on scenes of desperate refugees, and the sometimes extreme political reactions those images have provoked.

Doyle hopes showing the value of migrants through positive stories will shift the political narrative and counter xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent in parts of Europe.

The Mexican government, an enthusiastic participant, will put "Soy Migrante" posters on display next month.

Facebook in Germany has also lent support, donating online advertising space. Four videos have been posted in German on Facebook in the last two days, garnering five million views as of noon Thursday.

The campaign — launched in time for the UN's International Migrants Day — builds on a crowd-funded initiative "I am an Immigrant," introduced earlier this year in the U.K. by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Reflections on life in a new country 1 **Lauriane, from France, now in Georgia — "Everyone refers to people like me as 'expats.' In reality, I am a migrant."** 2 **Nadifo, from Somalia, now in Canada — "I think Canada is a good country, where multiculturalism is practised, where so many people are there together in peace."** 3 **Mihir, from India, now in the U.K. — "I feel Indian but I feel British, too. This is a duality."** 4 **Rahi, from Iraq, now in Belgium — "(My family has been) given so many opportunities here that Belgium has become our second home."** ALL PHOTOS VIA IAMAMIGRANT.ORG

REPORT

Global refugee numbers bypass 20M

The global refugee population has surpassed the 20-million mark for the first time since 1992, says the United Nations refugee agency.

According to its 2015 mid-year update report, an average of 4,600 people are being forced to flee their countries every day as Syria's war remains the single biggest cause worldwide of both new refugees and continuing mass internal and external displacement.

By the end of June, there were 20.2 million refugees — up from 19.5 million a year ago — and 34 million internally displaced people — up by 2 million — around the world.

In the first six months of the year, the international community received 993,600 asylum claims, accounting for a 78 per cent increase over the same period in 2014, said the report to be released in Geneva on Friday.

As of June 30, Turkey was the world's biggest host country, with 1.84 million refugees on its territory. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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2015	CAMARO 2SS	52114	$53,225	$39,498	$13,727
2015	CAMARO 2SS	52120	$53,755	$39,8 SOLD	3,857
2015	CAMARO 2SS	52113	$52,755	$39,9 SOLD	3,444
2015	CAMARO 2LT	52119	$40,440	$30,198	$10,242
2015	CITY EXPRESS CARGO VAN	58003	$28,255	$21,998	$6,257
2015	CITY EXPRESS CARGO VAN	58004	$29,410	$22,7 SOLD	612
2015	CITY EXPRESS CARGO VAN	58002	$28,740	$22,298	$6,442
2015	ENCORE FWD	59425	$30,435	$24,198	$6,737
2015	ENCORE AWD, 1SB	59418	$32,340	$25,5 SOLD	342
2015	ENCORE AWD, 1SD	59421	$36,405	$27,7 SOLD	107
2015	ENCORE AWD	59427	$32,340	$25,598	$7,342

YEAR	MODEL	STK#	WAS	NOW	SAVINGS
2015	LACROSSE AWD, ULTRA LUX	59105	$53,090	$41,398	$11,692
2015	REGAL GS TURBO, AWD	59005	$51,745	$38,6 SOLD	,047
2015	SIERRA HD SLE 4X4 DBL	57042	$58,365	$42,198	$16,167
2015	SILVERADO HD 1LZ 4X4 DBL	55001	$65,605	$47,0 SOLD	,607
2015	SILVERADO HD 1LZ 4X4 CREW	55091	$68,935	$49,698	$19,047
2015	SILVERADO HD 1LZ 4X4 CREW	55086	$69,525	$49,798	$19,727
2015	CORVETTE 3LT COUPE	52023	$87,470	$79,498	$7,972
2015	CORVETTE Z51 3LT	52036	$85,120	$77,898	$7,222
2015	CORVETTE 3LT COUPE	52040	$83,890	$76,698	$7,192
2015	CORVETTE 3LT CONV	52041	$87,490	$79,698	$7,792
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Let sleeping teens lie

EDUCATION

Eight too early to start class, experts say

Ben Early yawns before classes at Roosevelt High School in Seattle. The Seattle school board voted last month to adopt an 8:45 a.m. start time beginning next year for all of its high schools and most of its middle schools. ELAINE THOMPSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More school districts around the U.S. are heeding the advice of scientists who have long said that expecting teens to show up to class before 8 a.m. isn't good for their health or their report cards.

The Seattle school board voted last month to adopt an 8:45 a.m. start time beginning next year for all of its high schools and most of its middle schools, joining 70 districts across the nation who adopted a later start time in recent years.

The movement still has a long way to go: There are more than 24,000 U.S. high schools. Supporters expect that such decisions will be made more quickly now that people have mostly stopped debating the underlying science.

Proponents of later start times got a boost last year when the American Academy of Pediatrics said that while starting later isn't a panacea for teen health and academic problems, it can improve students' lives in many other ways.

"Essentially, across the board, any domain that you look at improves pretty dramatically," said Dr. Judy Owens of Boston Children's Hospital and author of the academy's policy statement on teen sleep. After the report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also pushed for later bell times.

Research studies have shown later start times help combat sleep deprivation in teens, who naturally fall asleep later than their parents would like, and improve academic success, attendance, mental health and cut sleep-related car accidents.

Bridget Shelton, a freshman at Seattle's Roosevelt High School, believes the change in bell times will help her move from getting 6-7 hours of sleep to closer to 8 hours next year.

"I know many students that come in and are just struggling to stay awake," she said. "Many of my friends are falling asleep in class."

BALTIMORE

Hung jury means retrial in Freddie Gray case

Instead of a dramatic conclusion to the first of six trials of police officers in the death of Freddie Gray, the mistrial left Baltimore, Md., in suspense and confusion, with no immediate understanding of what happens next.

The city had braced for a possible repeat of the protests, destruction and dismay that engulfed the city in April after Gray's neck was broken in the back of a police van. But several small marches ended peacefully overnight as the community tried to process the news.

Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams acknowledged the hung jury Wednesday after the panel deadlocked over whether Officer William Porter had committed any crimes by failing to take measures that might have saved the life of the young black man, who was shackled and placed face down in the wagon after running from police.

Back at square one, prosecutors and defence attorneys met in Williams' chambers Thursday morning to discuss dates for a possible retrial. A uniformed deputy stood guard, and when the lawyers left about 30 minutes later, they declined to comment, citing the judge's gag order.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Putin describes Trump as 'bright and talented'

In Vladimir Putin's view, Donald Trump is "bright and talented" and "the absolute leader" in the presidential race. The Russian word he used not only means "bright" in terms of intelligence, but also "vivid" and even "gaudy."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Donald vs. Kimmel

In an appearance on Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show Wednesday, Donald Trump was questioned about campaign issues, saying he's gotten calls of thanks from friends who are Muslim.

"Those may have been crank calls," Kimmel replied.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tunisians take part in a ceremony on December 17, 2015 in the central town of Sidi Bouzid. MOKHTAR KAHOULI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Trigger of Arab Spring remembered

TUNISIA

Five years since a street vendor set fire to himself

Tunisians who won the Nobel Peace Prize joined townspeople in the country's beleaguered heartland Thursday to mark five years since a desperate street vendor set himself on fire, unwittingly setting in motion upheaval across the Arab world.

Children waved Tunisian flags, horsemen in traditional clothing paraded and crowds sang the national anthem during a celebration around the central plaza of Sidi Bouzid. But disenchantment tinged the celebrations of a revolution that brought Tunisia a budding democracy.

Unemployment remains rife, and Tunisia is grappling with the threat of violent Islamic extremism, now ravaging the region from neighbouring Libya to Syria, after uprisings inspired by Tunisia's revolt that led to lawlessness or civil war.

Members of the Tunisian quartet of non-governmental groups that won this year's Nobel took part in a series of events Thursday in Sidi Bouzid, the epicenter of Tunisia's revolution, where fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight on Dec. 17, 2010.

It was a personal gesture of protest by Bouazizi, 27, who died of his injuries. But his cry of despair captured the plight of the poor and jobless and echoed throughout the North African country, triggering protests that left 300 dead and thousands injured.

Within a month, the country's autocratic ruler, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, had fled to Saudi Arabia after nearly a quarter-century as president —and soon protests erupted in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Morocco.

Residents feel their concerns about joblessness and corruption remain unanswered, and complained that only one government minister took part in Thursday's event.

"The sacrifice of Mohamed Bouazizi was in vain, it brought nothing to Sidi Bouzid," said resident Riadh Jelali, an unemployed 30-year-old, at Thursday's events.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Egypt's Star Wars opening day cancelled

Maybe the Dark Side is to blame.

Fans in Egypt with IMAX tickets for the premiere of Star Wars: The Force Awakens were bitterly disappointed when the theatre in Cairo said it was cancelling its showings on opening day.

"We are extremely sorry to let you know that the IMAX copy of STAR WARS shipped to our theatre is corrupt," the theatre said on its Facebook page Wednesday.

IMAX Egypt says the movie is showing as scheduled Thursday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THAILAND

Junta silences Monarchy's critics

Since last year's military coup, Thailand has seen a spate of lèse majesté prosecutions, putting people in jail for years for insulting the king.

FACEBOOK CRIME

Thanakorn Siripaiboon was arrested and held in a secret military location for almost a week before resurfacing on Monday at a Bangkok courthouse, where he was charged with defaming the monarchy.

The 27-year-old factory worker now faces up to 37 years in prison for liking a Photoshopped picture of the king and his dog and sharing an infographic about a military corruption scandal on Facebook.

DON'T DIS THE KING

Under the interim constitution, junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha has extraordinary powers to do whatever is necessary to prevent acts undermining national security, including detaining people for up to a week without a warrant.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

"The travesty of law enforcement under the junta's rule [has] reached a new low," said Sunai Phasuk of Human Rights Watch. "Thanakorn was charged with lèse majesté for ... comments that Thai authorities considered as mocking the king's dog."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thailand's king Bhumibol Adulyadej. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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CRIME

Exec who jacked up drug price arrested

Martin Shkreli, the former hedge-fund manager vilified for buying Turing Pharmaceuticals and jacking up the price of a life-saving drug more than 50-fold, was arrested Thursday on securities fraud charges unrelated to the furor.

The boyish-looking 32-year-old entrepreneur — an unapologetically aggressive businessman and relentlessly self-promoting figure who has called himself "the world's most eligible bachelor" on Twitter and recently plunged into the hip-hop world by buying an unreleased album by Wu-Tang Clan — was taken into custody in a grey hoodie and awaited an appearance in federal court in Brooklyn.

Online, many people took instant glee in his arrest, some of them joking about a judge ratcheting up his sentence or lawyers jacking up their hourly fees 5,000 per cent for defending him in his hour of need.

Shkreli was charged in an indictment unconnected to the drug price hikes imposed by his company Turing Pharmaceuticals. The charges instead involve his actions at another pharmaceutical company, Retrophin, which he ran as CEO from 2012 to 2014.

The indictment said Shkreli and others orchestrated three interrelated fraud schemes from 2009 to 2014. It said they fraudulently induced investors to sink their money into two separate funds and misappropriated Retrophin's assets to satisfy Shkreli's personal and professional debts.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Martin Shkreli is escorted by law enforcement agents in New York on Thursday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Facebook is rolling out a feature called Photo Magic that will automatically address a message so it can be sent quickly to friends identified in a picture. ISTOCK

Facebook trying a little Photo Magic

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Feature aims to foster more allegiance to Messenger app

Facebook is trying to make it easier to send photos as the holiday season's picture-taking frenzy escalates.

The world's largest social-networking service is offering a feature called Photo Magic that will automatically address a message so it can be sent quickly to Facebook friends identified in a picture. The option relies on the same image-recognition technology that attaches people's names to Facebook posts.

Facebook Inc. will highlight Photo Magic in a Messenger update that started rolling out Thursday to users of Apple's iPhones and smartphones running on Google's Android software.

The update is being distributed to a broad audience after a month of testing among smartphone users in Australia. Facebook is planning to make Photo Magic available to Messenger users everywhere in the world, except in Canada and the European Union.

Messenger has more than 700 million users, about half the size of the audience on Facebook's social network.

Facebook is counting on Photo Magic to foster more allegiance to its Messenger app as it competes against other competing services such as Snapchat that have become particularly popular among teenagers and young adults.

As part of the Messenger upgrade, Facebook is also including an option that will allow users to change the colours of their exchanges with different friends and switch the formal name of a recipient to a nickname, such as "mom" or "dad."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

9.5B

Number of pictures already being sent each month through Messenger, according to Facebook

CHARITIES

Tech used to tap new dollars

A group of 20-somethings flew from Vancouver to El Salvador earlier this month to build new homes for agricultural families displaced by flooding. Their materials included wood, fibre cement and, most importantly, Snapchat.

The millennials used the popular video-messaging app to record heartfelt donation requests, and then fanned them out to their social networks. In short order, each had crowd-funded the $3,000 required per home for the 20 families.

The innovative fundraising method that leverages several technologies was developed by a Vancouver technology startup called Change Heroes.

It's just one of several ventures by British Columbia-based tech companies that are turning philanthropy on its head. They're doing it by tapping the hard-to-reach millennial demographic using the digital medium that dominates their lifestyle.

By using the tools young adults communicate with, in this case personal, one-to-one video messages, more than 50 per cent of those asked made donations.

The average donation was $250.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Dion Machiskinic

Take notice that on the **23rd of December, 2015 at 9:30 A.M., at Calgary Family Court, Courtroom # 1205, 601 – 5th Street SW, Calgary, Alberta**, a hearing will take place.

A Director, under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act will make an application for: **Custody Order; Temporary Guardianship Order** of your children born on **September 19th 2014** & **January 14th 2013.** If you wish to speak to this matter in court, you MUST appear in court on this date. You do have the right to be represented by a lawyer. If you do not attend in person or by a lawyer, an Order may be made in your absence and the Judge may make a different Order than the one being applied for by the Director. You will be bound by any Order the Judge makes. You do have the right to appeal the Order within 30 days from the date the Order is made.

Contact: Jackie Ellice; Leanne Baines; Daniella Eggink
Calgary Region, Child and Family Services
Phone: (403) 297-2978

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Calgary Region, Child and Family Services
Phone: (403) 297-2978

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Weekend, December 18-20, 2015

THE BIG THING: GUFF

Baloney. Crapola. Baffling B.S. Or, as the Brits say, guff. Whatever you call it, overinflated, nonsensical language is an epidemic in the business world (and everywhere). Lucy Kellaway, the founder of Guffipedia, a new site that names and shames the ghastliest guffers, says the proliferation of goofy jargon is a "tragedy with no remedy." What do you think? Is guff a verbal scourge, or does it have its uses — other than being a convenient way to fill empty air?

SOURCE: THE FINANCIAL TIMES

1 Awful or awesome? Some of Guffipedia's stars include Speedo, for rebranding its swimming cap as a "hair management system," advertising firm Circus Street, which boasts that its brands become "multi-dimensional communication scaffolds," and an unnamed food-industry analyst who calls bottled water an "affordable, portable lifestyle beverage."

2 When guff works So why do people continue to appreciate (and repeat) utter nonsense? "It makes you sound clever; it shows you belong to a club; it is an alternative to thinking, and ... you can say things that sound decent but are actually meaningless," Kellaway says.

3 Dazzled by drivel In a study published last month, psychologists at the University of Waterloo presented subjects randomly with computer-generated sentences like "Wholeness quiets infinite phenomena," real tweets from spirituality guru Deepak Chopra (example: "Attention and intention are the mechanics of manifestation") and common sayings ("A river cuts through a rock, not because of its power but its persistence"). Many people found all three types of statements profound. Believers in the paranormal were more likely to say the fake and New-Age phrases were really deep.

Home at the haunted house for the holidays

Stephen Thomas
For Metro

The holidays are coming up, and, if you're like a lot of people, you'll be heading home for a few days to spend time with the fam. And by home, I mean not your home, but the house where your parents live.

Going home and hanging out with your family can be hard for a lot of people. Triple-brewed tensions that have been soaking in a familial collective unconscious for decades, divisive voting allegiances, racism, shame at confronting the shortcomings you only really feel in contrast to high-achieving siblings — the list goes on.

As your parents age, a procession of hellspawn rush in to fill the dark spaces in the home.

But going home is especially hard when your parents' house is haunted.

Like mine. That's right, my parents got themselves a big old haunted house.

Haunted by what, you ask?

Ghosts, of course. Ghosts of vicious arguments, traumatic memories and just your standard-issue childhood. How do you know if you're visiting a haunted house, you ask?

Let me tell you a story.

I went home for Christmas last year, and I was hanging my coat up in the closet when a hand came out and took my coat from my hands, hung it neatly on the rack, and hissed, quite politely, "You will never live up to your father's expectations."

The strange thing is, when I was a kid, I didn't even notice that my parents' house was haunted. Although maybe the house had fewer ghosts then. You know, there are things you don't notice about your family when you're a kid because your home is like water to a fish: It's all you know. It's only when you start to see what other families are like that you twig that not all houses' hallways emit deep, echoey whispers of "GET OUUUUUT."

Or maybe that just wasn't there when I was a kid. It does make a certain kind of sense that as your parents age, and you age, and once-vital arguments congeal into silence, a procession of hellspawn would rush in to fill the dark spaces of the home where your little soul was nurtured, undeterred by kind words, or lovers, or therapy — nay, growing stronger and feeding on the food only of itself, like a human centipede that ... grows.

Anyway, how to get rid of these ghosts? There is only one way. That's right: exorcism.

There's a little-known law of the Swiss psychotherapist Carl Jung that says every time you marshal your bravery and broach a Terrifying Topic with your parents, or other family member, in the Haunted Location, the ghost who haunts that location withers and dies. So: Do that.

"But I don't have ghosts in my home!" you say. Don't you? Listen carefully to the silence in the kitchen when everyone else has gone to sleep, and the dinner's dishes, now dry, rest in the dish rack, and two stained glasses of wine stand on the dining room table.

Listen to the hush.

Happy holidays!

Stephen Thomas lives and writes in Toronto. Follow him on Twitter @skwthomas.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

You don't have a right to a free online comment section

Commenters on the Globe and Mail's website are (predictably) dismayed.

The Toronto Star announced the end to its online comment sections on Wednesday, and when the Globe reported the move, its own readers — more than 400 of them — mourned the loss.

One wrote a six-point defence of comment sections as avenues for free expression. Some argued the "ultra-left downtown elites" couldn't handle the heat. Many called it short-sighted and said they've no interest in commenting on social media. They like their anonymity and even promised to drop their subscriptions if the Globe followed suit.

But the Star is not out on a limb. Dozens of media outlets around the world, including Postmedia in September, have made the same call. Why? Because comments are rife with abuse and threats, racism, sexism and bigotry (for which the publishers are legally responsible). No one, not even the Globe commenters, denies it. Cleaning up that mess takes resources, and media companies are rather tight on resources these days.

Some outlets, the New York Times being the most prominent, argue comments sections should be thought of not as an added bonus for readers but as the meat of engagement. Lose engagement and you lose readers. Lose readers and you lose money.

It's perhaps easier for the Grey Lady to downplay moderating costs; It has the advantage of being part of a new digital project to analyze and develop tools for reader comments.

But supposing comments sections really are integral to the exercise of online journalism, readers should be willing to pay. Maybe that means an extra fee in order to comment. Maybe it means watching an ad or just paying more overall for the news.

Readers should know digital and print subscriptions do not cover the cost of journalism, let alone endangered investigative journalism, let alone comment monitors. Ad dollars are only going in one direction, and while companies flail about for the best way to build readership and new revenue, some functions will get cut.

Free speech is important but it's not a newspaper's job to give it you. Media companies aren't public property. And your anonymity as a commenter is not a right.

So, yes, it would be great to have lively, spirited, hate-free debate in comments. Reporters would love to find story ideas there, along with new angles and meaningful critiques and media executives wouldn't scoff at 400-plus comments on a single piece.

But if you want it, it should cost you.

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metro WEEKEND
Your essential daily news
MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION DIGITAL

Despite playing one of the most recognizable characters of all time, Anthony Daniels, inset, almost never gets recognized. HANDOUT

The voice of 'We're doomed!'

ANTHONY DANIELS

Playing C-3PO comes with its share of strange moments

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Having one of the most recognizable voices in movie history can lead to some surreal moments. Just ask Anthony Daniels. He's played C-3PO in all seven Star Wars films, including this weekend's Star Wars: The Force Awakens and once rented a car with a very familiar voice on the GPS.

"I felt uncomfortable with me — very clearly — giving me instruction for something I didn't know. I found it quite bizarre. I was driving thinking, 'This is unnatural.'"

Other times the voice, which in real life is less mannered than his on-screen counterpart, brings him unexpected recognition.

For some of his fans, seeing isn't believing — hearing is.

"One of the most charming things that happens to me is when an adult will bring a child to me and say, 'He doesn't believe you're C-3PO.'

"And why would he? I'm some old guy with white hair. Then I do the voice. You see the sound go in one ear and then there is an absolutely realistic time delay whilst the synapses process this. Nothing happens for a second-and-a-half, then suddenly there's a smile and excitement. I love that delay while they process it. You couldn't buy that. I've been given that and it gives me utter joy because it is without guile. It is just an honest recognition of something I did."

A week before Daniels trekked to Tunisia in 1976 to begin shooting the sci-fi space opera, he was a stage actor performing in Tom Stoppard's absurdist play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.

"It's about two nobodies," he says. "Rosencrantz is a bit gung ho, (he) doesn't think. Doesn't work things out really; just goes for the main thing. His friend Guildenstern is much more reserved, much more intellectual. He thinks about things. Worries about things.

"There I am a week later playing C-3PO in the desert with R2D2. I would say it was three or four years later that something in my brain went, 'Wait a minute, R2 and 3PO are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.' There is a nice synergy there, or connection I think. 3PO is the clever one and R2 is the gung ho one. They're odd couple buddies. It is a great dynamic to act off."

Today C-3PO and R2D2 are seen as a classic combo, but during filming, Daniels had his doubts it would work.

"The problem for me was R2D2 never made any sounds so I was playing off myself. Not to aggrandize myself, but it was quite a challenge. It was a bit like a terrible Whose Line Is It Anyway? where you pretend a chair is your best friend.

> **"The problem for me was R2D2 never made any sounds so I was playing off myself.**
> Anthony Daniels

"When I saw the final movie and there were R2's beeps and responses, to me it was total magic because that was the first time I ever saw it. They had woven a conversation after the fact."

Playing the golden droid has been a lifelong career for Daniels. The 69-year-old actor was just 30 years old when he first donned C-3PO's suit and has since appeared in person or voice in dozens of movies, television shows, commercials, PSAs and live events as the character. He's even in the legendary The Star Wars Holiday Special and says he's been "very lucky to be given the chance" to play C-3PO but calls that his "business life."

"I don't go around saying, 'Do you know who I am?'

When I suggest he could at least use his fame and the C-3PO voice to get great tables in restaurants he says, "No, no, no. Then they'd say there's no table tonight or tomorrow. I don't think people would be too terribly impressed to have me in the restaurant. Were I to enter in a gold suit then I could have the entire room to myself!"

CURMUDGEONLY CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Not everyone loves the holidays — in fact, some people dread them. Take this quiz to see if you're a Christmas curmudgeon:

1. It's Nov. 1, the day after Halloween, and you walk into a store and hear Christmas music blaring. What do you do?

a. Buy the store, shut it down
b. Swear at the top of your lungs
c. Go on a rampage

2. A loved one asks for a gift that's outrageously expensive. What's your game plan?

a. Flat out no
b. Steal it
c. Buy it, then tear it to shreds

3. You've been tasked with bringing a side dish for Christmas dinner. What do you bring?

a. Something you picked up at a convenience store on the way to the party — which you're late to
b. Booze
c. Water

4. You pass by a Santa look-alike on the street, collecting money for a local charity. What's your reaction?

a. "Leave. Me. Alone!"
b. "Make me a sandwich."
c. "Water... gun."

5. It's Christmas morning. What's your first thought when you open your eyes?

a. Bah humbug
b. @#&$!
c. Bright light! Bright light!

Mostly a: You're Scrooged — You're selfish and cynical, but you may learn some lessons this Christmas that will turn your frown upside down.
Mostly b: You're a Bad Santa — You've been misbehaving (a lot), but this might be the Christmas you go good.
Mostly c: You're a Gremlin — You'd better not eat any Christmas cookies after midnight.

Whether you're a curmudgeon or not, there's a Christmas movie for you. Starting Dec. 8 and running until Jan. 12, Hollywood Suite is offering a free preview of uncut and commercial-free movies that shaped the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s. Available on television service providers across the country, this free preview includes access to Hollywood Suite On Demand, where available. Rediscover such Christmas classics as Gremlins (1984), Scrooged (1988), Bad Santa (2003) and more.

HOLLYWOODSUITE

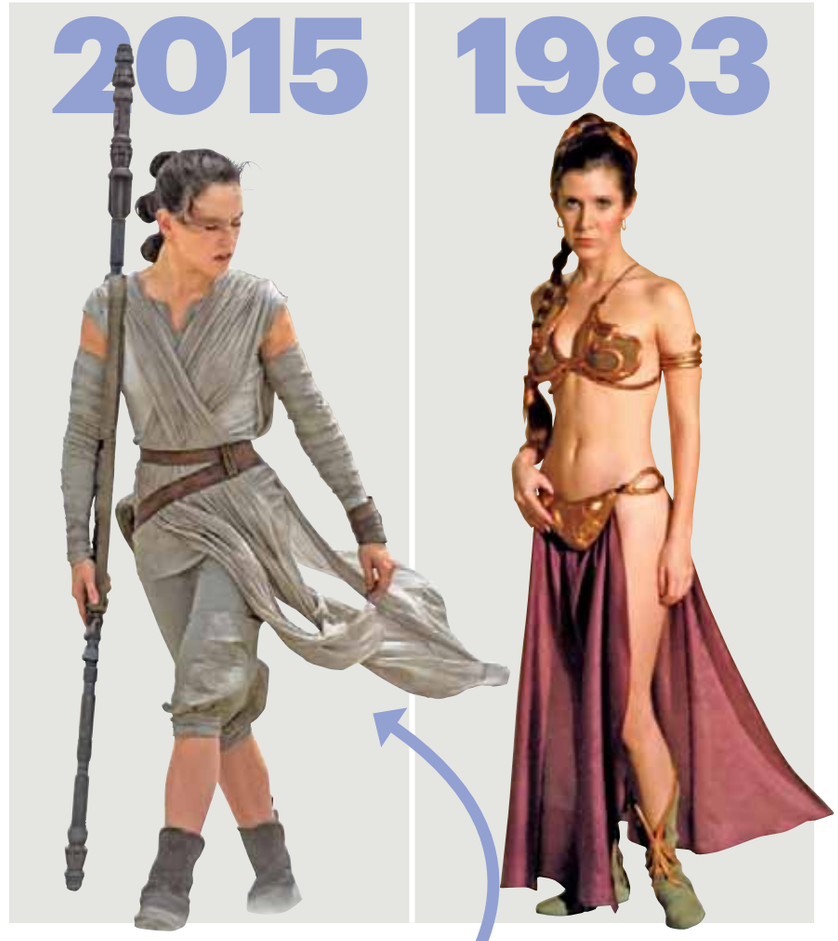
70s movies 80s movies 90s movies 00s movies

STAR METRO Content Solutions

Star Wars: May the fashion be with you

COSTUME

Legacy lives on with wardrobe in latest movie instalment



From Obi-Wan Kenobi's Jedi robes to Darth Vader's mask and Princess Leia's golden bikini, costumes featured in Star Wars are arguably as famous as the franchise's characters themselves.

As The Force Awakens arrives in theatres on Friday, costume curators and creators can't wait to see how fashion plays a role in the latest instalment.

"From the prequels, you look at some of Natalie Portman's gowns, they're so lavish, they're so fashionable. And what that says to me is that society is doing well," said Saul Drake, project director of the Smithsonian travelling exhibition Rebel, Jedi, Princess, Queen: Star Wars and the Power of Costume.

"What's really interesting to see for The Force Awakens costumes is that it's kind of almost a return to form for the classic style of costume. They're very sparse, they're very monotone, there's not a lot of embellishment on there. And without even seeing the movie, what that tells me is that the society is not doing that well. There's struggle going on.

"It's interesting to see how those costumes not only create character, but they also reflect what's going on in the Star Wars movies in that time period."

A selection of designs from The Force Awakens are among the 70 costumes currently on display in the Smithsonian's exhibition at the Discovery Times Square centre in New York until Sept. 5, 2016.

Styles sported by newcomers Finn (John Boyega) and Rey (Daisy Ridley) are also featured alongside notable ensembles from the six previous films spanning from the 1977 debut to 2002's Attack of the Clones.

Toronto-based costume and set designer Sarah Armstrong said she's noted some parallels between the designs she's seen so far on Finn and Rey and those worn by their on-screen predecessors Han Solo and Leia (Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher.)

They harken back to fashions from the original movies, which encompassed Asian-inspired designs with simple shapes alongside military-influenced styles, Armstrong said.

"I think it's incredible how the original designer (John Mollo) was able to blend and marry the Samurai with a modern warrior and build archetypes that have remained timeless," said Armstrong. "You can't ignore that. And there are very few films out there that have been able to do that.

"I think that's also one of the reasons it's been so successful because it's a unique thing on its own, and that's why it still retains its impact."

Among the most enduring costumes from the film franchise is its most revealing.

The gilded bikini worn on-screen by Fisher in 1983's Return of the Jedi has remained perennially popular — and parodied — ever since.

Comedian Amy Schumer struck a suggestive pose with C-3PO while dressed as Leia on the August cover of GQ. Montreal label UNTTLD was awarded a $15,000 prize in a Star Wars costume contest held during Toronto's World MasterCard Fashion Week in October with their interpretation of Leia's look.

> **There's not a lot of embellishment... Without even seeing the movie, what that tells me is that the society is not doing that well.**
> Saul Drake, Smithsonian

Recent published reports suggested that Disney plans to retire the two-piece from use in product sales and marketing. Company representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"The fact that it it's a very male-centred world makes anything that Leia wore stand out," Armstrong said. "Leia's costumes are very (much) drawn on some of the male shapes but are very feminine."

Armstrong said the fashion formula established early in the Star Wars series was "incredibly successful" and it would be wise for those now steering the franchise not to veer too far off-course.

"They'll want to have something to appeal to the old fans, the people like me that saw it in '77, and they're going to want to appeal to a whole new generation of people. ... Once they've had success with this first one, you might see them try to take some more liberties."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Maya Rudolf is anti-social(media)

This photo shows John Leguizamo as Dave and Maya Rudolph as Brinda, in a scene from the film, Sisters, directed by Jason Moore. K.C. BAILEY/UNIVERSAL PICTURES VIA AP

Q & A

The SNL vet on Sisters and steering clear of social media

Ned Ehrbar
Metro | Hollywood

When SNL vet Maya Rudolph isn't busy being hilarious — like in the new comedy Sisters alongside Tina Fey and Amy Poehler — she's busy raising her four young children with her husband, filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson. So it's understandable why she doesn't have much time for social media. But even if she did, she'd avoid it all the same.

Your character, Brinda, has a major chip on her shoulder from high school. How was it playing that kind of long-held resentment?
It is fun. I think the insecurity of Brinda's character really is our own collective insecurity. Everybody wants to be invited to the party. That's sort of the worst possible feeling in terms of high school days. You don't want to be the person that's left off the list. I feel like with Brinda it's almost as if she was just waiting for Kate (played by Fey) to come back to her hometown so she could be like, "See? I've really got my life together."

It's interesting how that FOMO (fear of missing out) turned her into a mean girl.
She has major FOMO. I just learned about FOMO. But everyone's got FOMO. Well, not everyone. Some people don't. Some people are actually content.

Twitter and Facebook have made it more pronounced.
Yes. I don't dabble in those things. Maybe I was just born so early in the '70s that it's just so hard for me to relate to the idea of sharing everything. When I do see other people's Instagrams or Twitter, it's such a carefully edited version of themselves, so everything looks f—ing great. Everything is perfect. Your life is perfect. But also I don't want anybody to know my business.

And it's a lot of work.
I feel like if I was constantly doing that and not doing the other things I need to do, I would hate myself a little bit. I don't have enough time to do the things I'm supposed to be doing, so it would just feel like pure procrastination.

Has anyone ever pressured you to do it for work?
Yes. When I did my variety show, I was given a Twitter account... And so I announced it, like, "Hey! My show's coming on. You should watch it." And the response was so crazy. I obviously had not set up my settings correctly, but people started responding and my phone would not stop. It felt weird.

That sounds terrifying.
It was. And I'm not used to it. I'm not good at it. I'm good at other things.

Such as?
Roller skating. But not ice skating. And I do not know how to rollerblade either.

How does this compare to crazy parties you've been to?
This is the craziest party. I mean, I did go to a lot of parties in high school. I grew up in L.A., and the thing to do was just go to random parties. You'd just go to somebody's house. It was so stupid, everything about it was dumb. The concept of it is just so screwed up. "Hey, there's a bunch of children in a home and the adults are gone and everyone's wasted!" That's a very, very dangerous, bad idea.

Do you think that new perspective has to do with being a grown-up and a parent?
That's the worst payback ever, actually having to think about that stuff. I don't have tattoos, but there was a time when I wanted one. And then my daughter, her cousin drew these dots on her face and I was like, "If you're going to get a tattoo you need to talk to me first. We need to have a conversation." What's happening to me? (laughs)

The Shortest Day calls all the shorts

FREE FILM SERIES

Canadian films join in a global celebration of short movies

Shorter attention spans are spawning memorable movies.

That's how award-winning Toronto filmmaker and animator Sol Friedman sees it. His eight-minute film Bacon & God's Wrath, a whimsical study of a 90-year-old Jewish woman weighing her decision to have her first taste of pork, is among 28 shorts screening in various locations during the free film series called The Shortest Day.

Started in France in 2011, The Shortest Day is now in 50 countries and is called a "celebration" of shorts, rather than a film fest.

The Canadian-made movies are bundled into four free programs: Dramas and Comedies; Kids; Family and Musical. They screen Friday to Monday at more than 80 venues across Canada, from shopping malls to theatres, leading up to Tuesday's Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. Go to theshortestday.ca for a list of programs, films and locations.

"This art form, which has always been on the periphery . . . is certainly having its moment," said Friedman, 33. He blends action and animation in Bacon & God's Wrath, along with a real pig's head that has a "conversation" with Razie Brownstone about her musings on religion, family and why, with the help of some research on "the Google," she's ready to eat bacon.

Bacon & God's Wrath is also having its moment. After screening at TIFF, it will be part of the Sundance Film Festival's shorts program in January and was recently named one of Canada's Top 10 short films for 2015. Friedman said he wanted to make a short on the subject and needed somebody willing to "break this taboo." He found it in Brownstone, a family friend.

It's an exciting time to be a filmmaker, he said, a bit like the Wild West. "With the tools being what they are, there's no excuse not to make a film if you're so inclined."

The shorts in the showcase are made using live action, stop-motion and animation techniques, and include Torill Kove's Oscar-nominated Me and My Moulton, Cordell Barker's If I Was God and Tamara Segura's experimental short about music and memory, Song for Cuba.

Films from other filmmakers include Call It Blue, directed by Ryerson University's Julia Hendrickson, winner of Best Student Short at the Kerry (Ireland) Film Festival, and Amir Honarmand's Be the Snow, about a pillow that runs away from home to explore the world.

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SCREENING

Some of the films screening for The Shortest Day from top: Be the Snow, Call It Blue, Song for Cuba, and Bacon & God's Wrath.

Q&A WITH ACTOR SARAH GADON

Inspired by long-vs.-short filmmaking, we set a challenge for Sarah Gadon, ambassador for The Shortest Day film celebration: give five-word answers to our long questions.

You have appeared in shorts and you made your directing debut with an episode of the Movie Network documentary series Reelside, which could indeed be considered a short. Why do you think shorts are a good method for you to explore your creativity as an actress and filmmaker?
Shorts = less money to make.

There are 28 shorts organized into four thematic programs. As someone who has worked so extensively with David Cronenberg (Maps to the Stars, Cosmopolis, A Dangerous Method), what would you call a program that was made up of Cronenberg shorts?
Indigestion: Brief Encounters With Pain (18A)

As The Shortest Day's 2015 English-language ambassador, do you see an ambassadorial role elsewhere for yourself now that you have the experience — perhaps in the diplomatic service, working at an embassy or the United Nations, or as the Canadian ambassador to a country of your choosing?
Yes. Global film ambassador, please.

If there was an opportunity for a filmmaker to collaborate with you on a film project that could eventually become a short film about you and your life, perhaps your day-to-day existence and how you spend your free time away from the cameras, what would this short be titled?
Codependence: A Small Canadian & Caffeine (PG).

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The documentary Noma: My Perfect Storm, about the famous Copenhagen restaurant, is out on VOD today. CONTRIBUTED

The taste of success

DOCUMENTARY

Film looks inside the best restaurant in the world

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

Noma: My Perfect Storm may capture 33-months in the kitchen of Rene Redzepi's four-time winning Best Restaurant in the World, but Pierre Deschamps actually never set out to make a movie about food.

"The first goal was to focus on Redzepi," admitted the filmmaker ahead of the documentary's release in select theatres and on VOD.

"The backdrop is Noma. I didn't want to go too much into the making of the food itself because we have TV shows and they do that all the time. I was really trying to tell the story of a person in a specific context and what that person achieved."

Redzepi's accomplishments are certainly worth attention. The young Danish chef has not only run world-renowned Noma, a restaurant in Copenhagen, he also invented New Nordic Cuisine — an artistic, locally-based gastronomy that relies heavily on seasonal ingredients and foraging. Perhaps more importantly, Deschamps explores how an ostracized Muslim youth battled racism and still seemingly suffers the insecurity of being an outsider — even as he runs the Best Restaurant in the World.

"I knew he has issues with racism (and) I knew with Noma, he was trying to do something different. The sum of those factors made him who he became," said Deschamps. "When you look at Redzepi's story, it's a guy who climbed the ladder of success within a few years to become the God of Food — people will be surprised looking at the ups and downs."

Moviegoers will also see behind the curtain of one of the most celebrated kitchens on the planet. There may be scenes of Redzepi rejoicing his apprentices' gastronomic experimentations, but they're equally balanced by brazen sequences of the famous chef emotional and unhinged.

"He knows me a bit — who I am and my philosophy about life. And he knows I wasn't going to dig into private stuff," admitted Deschamps about capturing such intimate moments on-screen. But the filmmaker is also quick to credit Danish culture's broad respect for "tall poppy syndrome" for Redzepi's modesty as well.

"You need to make sure you respect everyone and you shouldn't think of yourself too much," explained Deschamps.

"I think Rene has kept that sort of humility."

It's a guy who climbed the ladder of success within a few years to become the God of Food

Pierre Deschamps on Rene Redzepi

MORE EATS

Top three restaurants in Canada:

Toque! – Montreal
This fun Montreal restaurant has focused on local ingredients for an inventive menu made of gastronomic delights like pan-seared foie gras and venison loin.

Hawksworth Restaurant – Vancouver
With its elegant interior, the décor of Hawksworth is as swanky as its French and West Coast-influenced cuisine, which ranges from entrees like parmesan-crusted chicken to grilled sturgeon with squid ink risotto.

Buca – Toronto
An Italian spin on fine-dining, executive chef Rob Gentile serves up such fare as hand-rolled ricotta gnocchi or crispy pigs' ears with fennel. Even famed chef Jamie Oliver once tweeted his "favourite meal of the year" was at this upscale alleyway eatery.

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TV BRIEF

Khloe Kardashian to help brokenhearted sculpt new bodies in TV series

Khloe Kardashian is behind a new makeover series at the E! network, where she promises to help the brokenhearted get the "ultimate payback."

E! said Wednesday it had approved a six-episode series where one of the network's favourite sisters will be mentor people trying to turn their life around.

She calls the series Revenge Body with Khloe Kardashian. Looking great, she says, is always the best revenge for getting back at an ex.

The network did not say when the show will be on the air. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

My brother and I will be watching The Force Awakens wondering why no manufacturer ever released Aunt Beru's Blue Milk

Food doesn't factor large in that galaxy, far, far away. There's the scene on Tatooine where Luke drinks blue milk in his uncle and aunt's kitchen. There's the scene in the Mos Eisley cantina — a wretched hive of scum and villainy — where glowing cocktails are consumed. And there's the scene on Dagobah where Yoda breaks into Luke's kit rations and then Yoda cooks Luke a potent gruel in his hut.

Maybe that's because food is small potatoes compared to the sustenance of the Force. But that didn't stop my older brother from fashioning pieces of white, crustless Wonder bread into "space pellets."

Star Wars was the first movie that he ever saw in a cinema. It was the summer of 1977. My dad took him. He was 5. George Lucas' mythology and his characters, who lived long ago in those perfectly patinated worlds, made an impression on him that is still strong today.

By 1980, I was old enough to join in, much to my brother's inconvenience, to see The Empire Strikes Back, and Return of the Jedi, too, three years later. I remember the Star Wars bed sheets and matching drapes; pushing his patience while he watched his VHS copies of the trilogy while I played Barbies and recited the sacred script before the characters did; and choreographing scenes in the backyard where I insisted on being Han Solo because he had the best lines.

THE MOVIE: Star Wars series

THE MEMORY: Jessica and her brother

I remember taking photos of each other posing like Jedi Knights with our Polaroid cameras and then rotoscoping the lightsabers with magic markers; and saying, "May the Force be with you" in lieu of "Good night" after our parents tucked us in.

But here's the thing: his experience, ours, is not singular. Multiply it by many, many millions. This is why I can't wait to see the box office numbers this weekend after Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens opens on Dec. 18. The film's teasers and trailers have been viewed over 400 million times. I'm not sure there's ever been anything like it.

Much of the anticipation stems from our collective reverence for the material and fondness for its messages. Some people suggest that if you watch the original trilogy now, as an adult, you'll notice that Lucas didn't depart all that much in the three later prequels. It's just that his fan base had grown up and finally noticed how hokey his dialogue was.

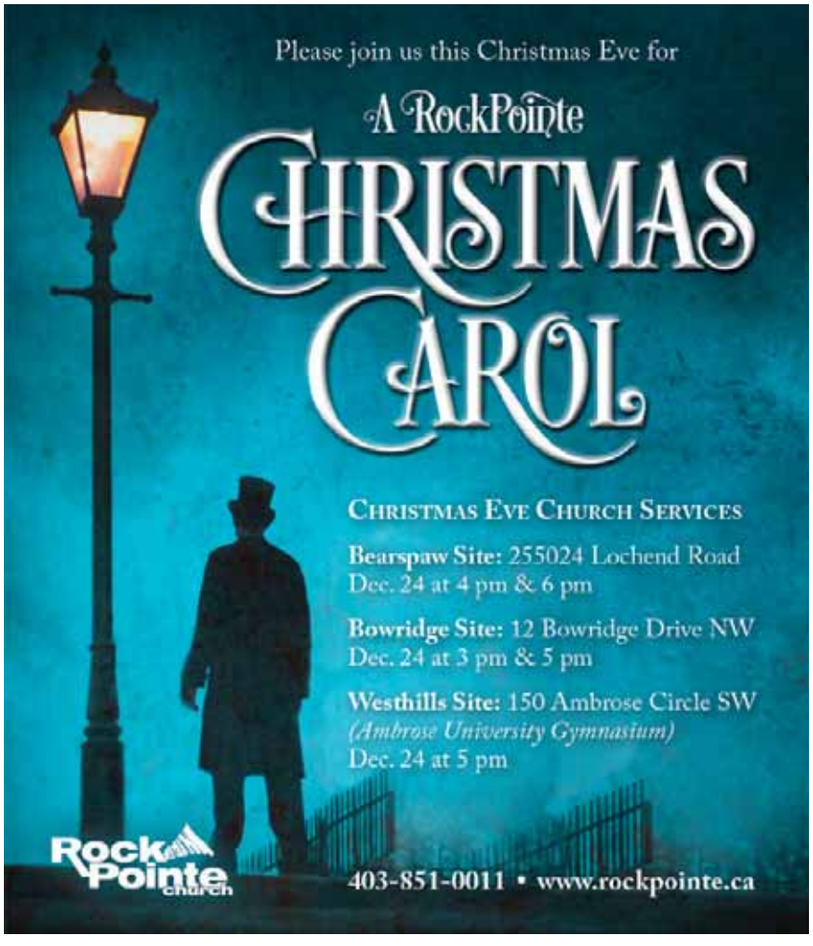
I don't know about that. But I do know that our only hope is The Force Awakens' director J.J. Abrams, not to mention screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan, who penned both Empire and Jedi.

My brother bought our tickets — for me, him, our partners and my dad — in October. Only recently did we discover that our mother is having cataracts removed the same day. She knew how important the movie was and didn't want to be the cause of disrupting our plan. But Simon was adamant that he skip the movie to take her to and from the operation. Let that sit for a second: while my mother has surgery, her kids will be watching a movie — wondering why no manufacturer ever released Aunt Beru's Blue Milk — and a non-blood relation will tend to her.

"What is wrong with us?" My brother recently asked me.

"I have no idea," I said. As for Simon? The Force is strong with that one.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.



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DRAMA/COMEDY

Sisters

Director: Jason Moore
Starring: Tina Fey, Amy Poehler

Two disconnected sisters are summoned home to clean out their childhood bedroom before their parents sell the family house. Looking to recapture their glory days, they throw one final high-school-style party for their classmates,

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 89% Audience: + 96%

DOCUMENTARY

Noma: My Perfect Storm

Director: Pierre Deschamps
Starring: Hanne Redzepi

A creative journey into the unique mind of René Redzepi. How did Redzepi manage to revolutionize the entire world of gastronomy, inventing the alphabet and vocabulary that would infuse newfound pedigree to Nordic cuisine?

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: NOT YET REVIEWED Audience: +70%

ANIMATION/KIDS

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip

Director: Walt Becker
Starring: Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler

Through a series of misunderstandings, Alvin, Simon and Theodore come to believe that Dave is going to propose to his new girlfriend in New York City... and dump them.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 8% Audience: + 82%

DRAMA

In The Heart of the Sea

Director: Ron Howard
Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Benjamin Walker

In the winter of 1820, the New England whaling ship Essex was assaulted by something no one could believe: a whale of mammoth size and will. The real-life disaster would inspire Herman Melville's Moby-Dick.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 60% Audience: 70%

ACTION & ADVENTURE

Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Director: J.J. Abrams
Starring: Harrison Ford, Daisy Ridley

In this continuation of the Star Wars saga, balance returns to the Force as the First Order, emerging from the ashes of the Empire, clashes with the Resistance, which includes newcomers and heroes from the former Rebel Alliance.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 94% Audience: +99%

ART HOUSE/INTERNATIONAL

Legend

Director: Brian Helgeland
Starring: Tom Hardy, Emily Browning

The true story of the rise and fall of London's most notorious gangsters, Reggie and Ronnie Kray, who captivated the public and once upon a time lorded over a criminal empire. An integral part of London's East End, and the iconic Swinging Sixties.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE

Critics: 60% Audience: 73%

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Idris Elba acknowledges that too much attention on his looks could taint him as just another pretty face. CONTRIBUTED

Luther is Elba's most natural role

INTERVIEW

Actor says there's plenty of parallels with detective

Idris Elba has many reasons for why he keeps coming back to Luther. "It's unfinished business, it's fertile ground," he explains. "The character continues to challenge me."

Detective Chief Inspector John Luther also challenges his fans, who are sure to greet him warmly for this, his fourth run, in the two-hour special airing at 9 p.m. E.T. Thursday on BBC America.

As usual, Luther finds its hero possessed by a grisly murder case: a serial killer with a cannibalistic bent.

Meanwhile, he remains haunted by Alice Morgan, the tantalizing sociopath from Season 1 who escaped arrest by Luther but became his twisted confidante. Conspicuously missing, her whereabouts unclear, she remains very much on Luther's mind and a key part of this tale.

Elba calls the demons-beset Luther "one of the closest characters in terms of who I am." It's a surprising claim, since, during this recent interview, he seems light-hearted in stylish casual wear, a marked contrast to the glum expression and no-nonsense suit Luther wears. "I don't feel like I have to throw on too much of a character to play John Luther," says Elba, attempting to explain himself. "We shoot in the area I grew up in (East London), and I really let the writer take me on the journey. It's the most naturalistic I can be in a role."

Even Luther's distinctive walk — a slouching swagger, hands jammed in his pockets, pushing forward with staunch intent — is comfortably derived from Elba's own gait: "I tore my left Achilles, which make my left leg sort of limp — or swag!"

A strapping, towering presence with leading-man looks, Elba nonetheless has been able to transform himself profoundly for his roles, such as the brutal leader of an African rebel army in his recent film Beasts of No Nation, as Nelson Mandela in Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom and as Stringer Bell, the strictly business Baltimore drug lord, in the HBO series The Wire.

No matter what his role, Elba is easy on the eyes. Asked if he gets weary of his extreme handsomeness being the focus of media and fans alike, he adopts an almost sheepish expression while handing credit to the camera. "Because I'm an actor, I've got that 'beauty light' on me," he insists. "In real life, it's not like that all the time. Some people go, 'He's nice, but he's not my sort of thing.'"

Acknowledging that too much attention to his looks could taint him as just another pretty face, he does allow that "it's a compliment and it's great, man. I could be described as 'aggressive,' or 'strong.' But 'sexy' works, too." And he laughs heartily.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Rap act N.W.A. gain hall of fame spot

RECOGNITION

Four '70s bands also make cut as inductees

The groundbreaking Los Angeles rap act N.W.A. will join a quartet of 1970s era FM radio rockers — Chicago, Cheap Trick, Deep Purple and Steve Miller — as 2016 inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

N.W.A., led by Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, was elected after three unsuccessful nominations in a year when a movie about their career, Straight Outta Compton, was a box office hit. Their hard-core tales of life on the street on songs like F--- the Police made them a provocative chart presence in the late 1980s and influenced an empire of other acts.

Both Miller and Cheap Trick made it during their first year on the ballots.

The induction ceremony for the Cleveland-based hall will be held April 8 in Brooklyn's Barclays Center. HBO will televise highlights later in the spring.

Guitarist Miller came out of the San Francisco rock scene and became a dependable maker of pop hits like Take the Money and Run, Fly Like an Eagle, Jet Airliner and Jungle Love.

Midwestern favourites Cheap Trick succeeded with a highly-amped version of Beatles-influenced melodies on hits Surrender and Dream Police. Their Live at Budokan album is one of rock's best-known live sets. Guitarist Rick Nielsen and rumpled drummer Bun E. Carlos gave them an indelible live presence.

The guitar riff for Deep Purple's Smoke on the Water remains one of the most recognizable in rock history. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore was a stalwart in a hard rock act that competed with Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath for the loyalty of metalheads.

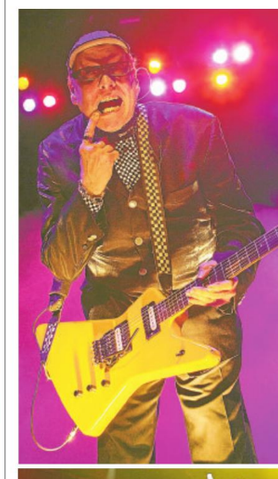
Before they shortened their name from the Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago was known for its jazz-rock fusion. Behind the vocals of Peter Cetera, they had a string of pop hits including Saturday in the Park, 25 or 6 to 4, If You Leave Me Now and Does Anyone Really Know What Time it Is?

More than 800 voters of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation selected the inductees.

The influential disco-era band Chic is becoming the Susan Lucci of music, failing to win induction in its 10th year as a nominee. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SNUBBED
Janet Jackson, The Cars, Los Lobos and Yes were among the nominees rejected this year.

N.W.A. members Dr. Dre, left, and Ice Cube. The rap act is a 2016 inductee in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Other inductees include Cheap Trick, top left, Steve Miller, top right, and Chicago, bottom. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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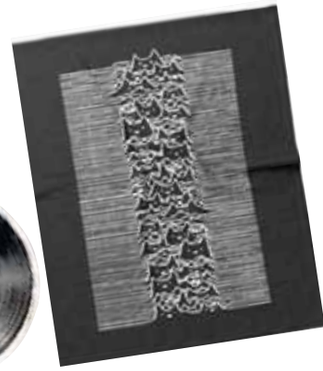
6 GIFTS FOR THE MUSIC NERD ON YOUR LIST

With a week to go before Christmas, we're in the Red Zone when it comes to panic shopping. What to buy the music fan/musician who has everything? Fear not because Alan Cross is here to offer gift suggestions for all budgets. **ALAN CROSS/METRO**

1 Cufflinks

OK, so cufflinks aren't as popular as they once were, but for $13.50 US, I found a pair on Etsy that looks like tiny vinyl records.
Website: etsy.com/shop/monedus



2 Album Artwork Blanket

Society6 has a nice selection of throws depicting blown-up versions of classic albums. I'm stuck between one based on My Bloody Valentine's Loveless and another of Unknown Pleasures from Joy Division. For $49 US, you could opt for both.
Website: society6.com/throw-blankets

3 Blood-spitting KISS doll

While KISS action figures date back to the '70s, the new 2015 edition of the Gene doll comes with "BLOOD SPITTING ACTION." It can be yours for $69.99 US from Figures Toy Company.
Website: figurestoycompany.com

4 Jack White's turntable for kids

You can bestow the pleasure of vinyl on your kids with a bright yellow portable turntable from Jack White's Third Man Records. Officially called Manny's Children's Turntable, it plays albums, 45s and 78s and comes with a USB port for converting vinyl into MP3s. A steal at $89.95 US.
Website: thirdmanstore.com

5 Music-themed toilet seats

Jammin' Johns, a company that promises "music to your rear," offers a selection of toilet seats with lids shaped like an acoustic guitar, a grand piano or the backside of a Fender Strat. You can view them all in the company's Throne Room (seriously). Expect to spend at least $200 US.
Website: jamminjohns.com

6 Sennheiser Orpheus Headphones

These 'phones from Sennheiser combine vacuum tube and solid-state technology. Frequency response is 8-100,000 Hz, which reproduces sound bats can't hear. Just under $76,000. Merry Christmas, one percenter.
Website: en-de.sennheiser.com/orpheus

Canuck cartoonist on Jughead reboot

COMICS

Writer-artist talks working with childhood favourites

As a kid in Barrie, Ont., cartoonist Steve Murray had an affinity for Archie Comics wry guy Jughead Jones, Marvel's anthropomorphic Howard the Duck and, of course, Star Wars.

Now the writer-artist is a part of those very worlds, thanks to a skyrocketing comic book career that has him so busy, he jokes: "It's not a good move."

"It's not good for my health, it's not good for my relationship, it's not good for anyone, really," Murray, who goes by the pseudonym Chip Zdarsky, said with a laugh in a recent phone interview from his Toronto home.

Indeed, the former National Post illustrator and columnist has enough projects on the go to even rattle the seemingly unflappable Jughead.

He's writing the rebooted Jughead series for Archie Comics, which launched in October, as well as a new Howard the Duck Marvel Comics book series that kicked off in March.

Meanwhile, he continues to illustrate his hit series Sex Criminals, which won a Will Eisner Comic Industry Award and has been optioned for a TV pilot by Universal Television.

And he recently drew a variant cover for issue No. 1 of Marvel's Star Wars: Vader Down comic.

The rare cover, featuring Darth Vader and Jaxxon the green rabbit, went gangbusters on the auction circuit: one copy recently sold on eBay for about $3,700 US and another sold for $4,000 during an online auction set up by Canada Cares. The latter sale will help support a Syrian refugee family's journey to Toronto.

Murray, whose other comics include Prison Funnies and Monster Cops, developed a passion for drawing as a child.

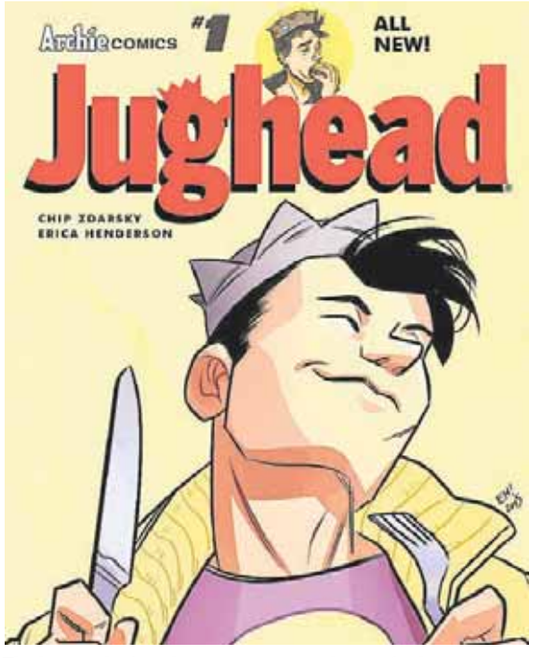
"I didn't do too well in art in high school, I think just because I always wanted to draw comics," said Murray, "so anything else I tried to turn into a comic book and the teacher would get upset with me."

While studying art at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., he had to do a 3-D recreation of a 2-D work of art. He built a comic frame around himself, had a speech balloon pointed at his head and impersonated Jughead.

"I recreated a panel from a Jughead comic just because of my affinity for the character," he said. "I think I got a C-plus. I don't think the teacher quite considered Jughead 'art.'"

An ironic notion now, given the fame the easygoing, burger-loving character has brought Murray on the convention circuit.

Murray said Archie Comics felt he was a good fit for Jughead because of his Chip Zdarsky online persona as well as some comical banter he had on Facebook with his hometown Applebee's restaurant that went viral last year. THE CANADIAN PRESS



The burger-loving character gets a makeover in the new comic series written by Chip Zdarsky. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

BOOKS

Edmonton-born Steve Murray, a.k.a. Chip Zdarsky, has been busy. Murray is writing the rebooted Jughead series for Archie Comics, which launched in October, as well as a new Howard the Duck Marvel Comics book series that kicked off in March. He's also penning "a sci-fi 'Wizard of Oz' saga" for Image Comics called Kaptara, with the first issue due out Dec. 23.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Negative thoughts age badly: Study

RESEARCH

Stereotypes about aging affect hearing, memory

If you believe growing old will claim your memory and degrade your senses, it could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, a new study has found.

Negative perceptions about aging, and what will happen to our minds and bodies as the years wear on, can influence how we feel about ourselves and, by extension, have an impact on how we go into that dark night, says a study published in the December issue of Psychology and Aging.

"People's feelings about getting older influence our sensory and cognitive functions," says University of Toronto psychology professor Alison Chasteen, lead author of the study titled Do Negative Views of Aging Influence Memory and Auditory Performance Through Self-Perceived Abilities?

"The worse your view of aging, the worse you tend to feel about your own abilities, and the worse you perform."

Until now, Chasteen says, aging research has focused on performance — and the differences on tests of memory and hearing at various ages.

But there hasn't been much exploration of an aging person's general views on getting older. And how that relates to their own experience. This study, Chasteen says, marks the first time researchers have put all three variables together to try and make links between them.

Between 2012 and 2013, about 301 participants between the ages of 56 and 96 — all with different levels of ability — submitted to a variety of tests at labs on the University of Toronto's downtown campus.

In addition to a hearing test, participants' memories were assessed — they were asked to repeat lists of words they saw on a computer screen and, at other times, heard through headphones. They were tasked with recalling a list of five words after a five-minute delay.

Researchers gauged each participants' views on aging by asking them to rate their level of concern in 15 scenarios that involve growing older.

For instance, they were instructed to choose a number between 1 and 9 to indicate how worried they felt about, say, losing their independence as time wears on or, to be blamed for a car accident because of their age — even if fault was unclear. They were also asked to agree or disagree with statements such as "I am good at remembering names," or "I can easily have a conversation on the telephone."

In a study, participants who scored high on the "fear of aging scale" felt worse about their abilities and also did worse on tests. ISTOCK

> **The worse your view of aging, the worse you tend to feel about your own abilities, and the worse you perform.**
> Alison Chasteen, researcher

Through complex statistical analysis, Chasteen says, researchers discovered that participants who scored high on the "stigma concern scale," and the "fear of aging scale," felt worse about their abilities and, in turn, fared worse on the hearing and memory tests.

The data held up even when researchers considered whether participants who had failing hearing and memories had realistic views of their own abilities, she says.

Individuals interpret their declining abilities in different ways and how they feel about them dictates whether or not they will try, by keeping busy and active, to maintain their function — and stimulate mind and body, Chasteen says.

The study also looked at the relationship between hearing and memory performance. Researchers discovered that seniors who did poorly on hearing tests also performed poorly on memory tests.

That could indicate that some problems remembering might be a function of a senior's inability to hear all the information.

"That could be part of the problem," Chasteen says. "When working with older adults reporting memory problems — we might want to check their hearing."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Your guide to hosting a hot pot party

ENTERTAINING

Guests share in the cooking of this communal Asian meal

It's the time of year to gather around the table for a hot pot. Here's your essential guide.

While many eagerly anticipate turkeys and Sunday roasts this winter, lots of Chinese households are looking forward to hot pot. A form of communal dining, people gather around a big pot of boiling broth on a single burner and cook their own meats and vegetables. Think of it as Asian fondue, but instead of dipping chunks of bread in cheese you're swishing slices of fatty beef in broth. Here's what you need to get started.

Soup base

Asian grocers sell soup bases containing peanut sauces or hot chilies, but it's easy to make your own. Keep it simple and clean-tasting by simmering a few slices of daikon and Chinese cabbage (just add to a pot of boiling water and let simmer for 30 minutes).

Regional variations in China (not to mention other hot-pot hotspots including Japan, Vietnam and Thailand) have tomato-based broths, herbal blends or soups filled with mouth-numbing Szechwan peppers.

Meats

The popularity of hot pot has led to Asian grocers selling pre-sliced meats including fatty beef, pork and lamb intended for the communal meal (T&T is a one-stop shop for this).

If you can't find pre-sliced meat, slice a well-marbled cut of rib-eye or chicken breast as thin as possible against the grain. These are essential because they add flavour to the broth and cook in less than a minute: as soon as the meat is no longer red or pink, it's ready to eat.

Try branching out to offal as well: Tripe, tendon, pig intestine, cubes of pigs' blood, thinly sliced kidneys, livers and beef tongues are popular hot pot ingredients.

Meatballs and dumplings

Hot pot meatballs and fishballs have a dense, bouncy texture when you bite into them. It's good to have a few floating around in the pot, ready to eat while something else is cooking.

Seafood

Shrimp, squid, mussels, shucked oysters, scallops, crab and fish such as salmon and bass cut into two-bite chunks are great for hot pot. Fake crab (surimi) is already cooked and only requires a quick dunk. I also recommend highly addictive fried fish skins. Eat them like chips, or dip them briefly in the hot broth to slightly soften.

Vegetables

Leafy greens and root vegetables balance out the protein you'll be eating. Dump handfuls of lettuces, watercress and snow pea shoots into the pot until they wilt, three minutes or less so they maintain a bit of their crunch. Bok choy takes an extra minute or two. Cut root vegetables — lotus root, daikon, carrots and potatoes — into inch-thick slices to flavour your broth, or slice them into thinner pieces if you want to eat them after a minute or two of cooking.

Mushrooms

Sliced king oyster mushrooms, shiitakes, hen-of-the-woods (maitake) or whole button mushrooms and bundles of shimeiji and enoki are ideal to soak up the broth.

Tofu

Opt for firm or extra-firm tofu so that it doesn't fall apart in the pot.

Gluten

Wheat gluten (the main protein in wheat) is tofu's meatier and more flavourful cousin made from overworked dough.

Noodles

When the broth is this tasty, you have to have some noodles. Udon, ramen, rice vermicelli and glass noodles are the most common options. Put noodles into the pot for just a minute or two toward the latter stages when the broth has taken on the flavours of the meaty gristle and fat.

Dipping sauces

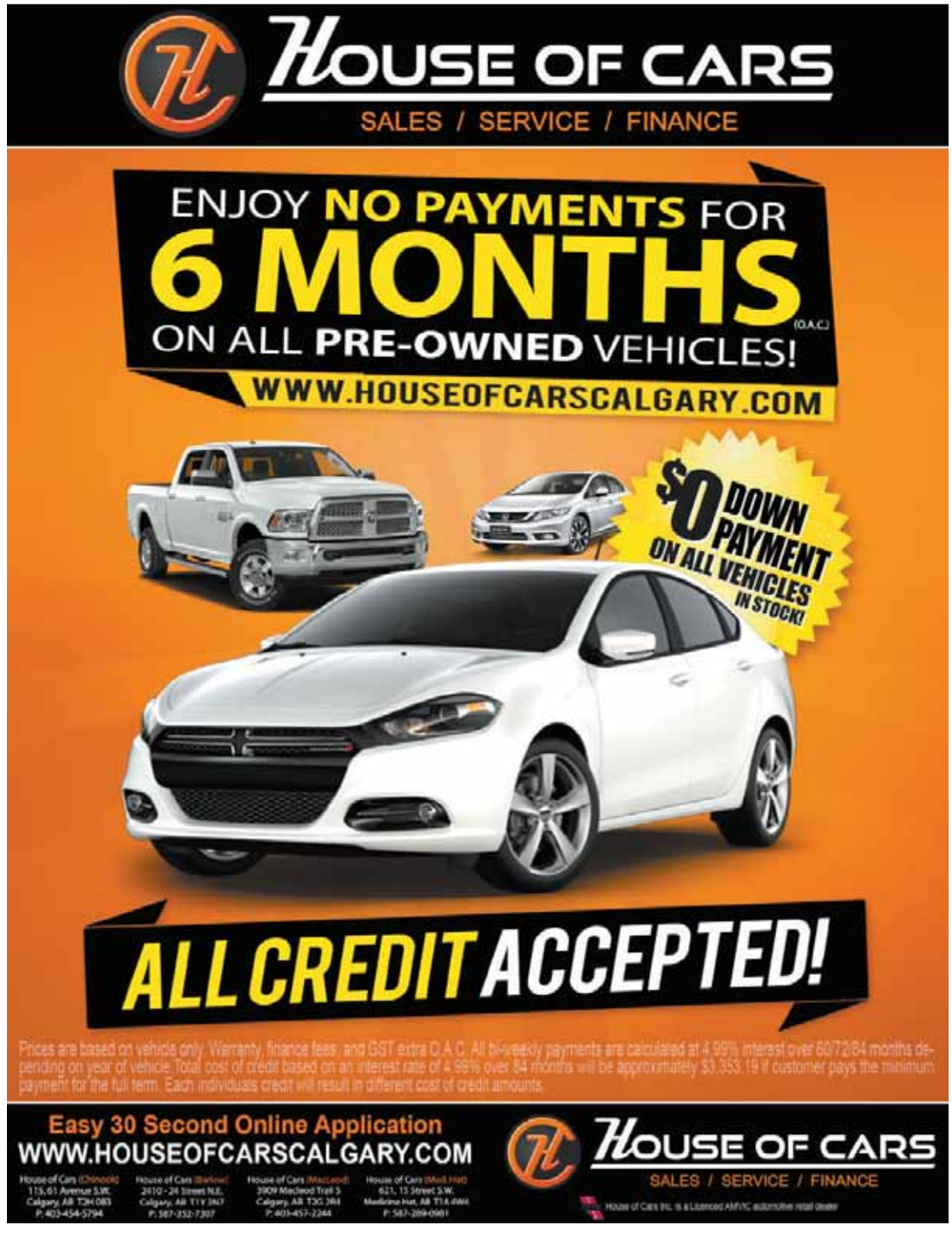
Set bottles of soy sauce and sesame oil, as well as jars of peanut sauce, spicy satay sauce, chili paste and hot sauce at the table with a small bowl for each guest to mix their own sauce. Add green onions to your personal bowl or beat a raw egg into your bowl. The egg is supposed to add a silky texture to the sauce, but consume uncooked eggs at your own risk. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Hot pot is a perfect holiday meal to get friends and family to gather round table for. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

FOOD

Hot tips

- Throwing too much into the pot at once drastically lowers the temperature of the broth, which makes everything take longer to cook. Don't rush. Cook a bit of food at a time and keep the broth at a steady boil or simmer. Have a kettle or pot of hot water ready in the kitchen to top up the broth.
- Each guest should have two pairs of chopsticks: one for raw meat; the other for eating the cooked food.
- The smell of boiled meats permeates clothing, take off the blazer and fancy cardigan before sitting down to dinner.



BOOK BRIEF

CBC's Canada Reads reveals long list

Books by revered novelists including Lawrence Hill, Michael Crummey and Kate Pullinger are among those on the long list for CBC's 2016 Canada Reads competition.

Hill is on the list with The Illegal (HarperCollins), Crummey is there with Sweetland (Anchor Canada) and Pullinger made the cut with Landing Gear (Anchor Canada).

CBC personality and author Wab Kinew is returning for a second year as host of the annual literature debate.

This year's theme is starting over and will feature books "about transformation and second chances, stories of migrants, immigrants and others who are choosing — or forced — to make major changes in their lives," says a release.

A total of 15 books are on the long list for the 15th edition of the program, in which high-profile personalities defend a book until a winner is chosen. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rules to live by, as told by a knight

INTERVIEW

Hawke says he drew on many sources for stories' wisdom

Actor-author Ethan Hawke took on modern-day parenting challenges with the help of a fictitious 15th-century Cornish knight.

His young adult book, Rules for a Knight, grew from Hawke's "tinkering" with stories he had written over the years for his own kids. The parables take the form of a letter from the knight, introduced as Hawke's ancestor, to his four children about living purposeful, ethical lives as he prepares to go into battle.

"It's a dialogue about some entry-level philosophical ideas that I think could be nice for young people," Hawke, 45, said.

They're warm and simply, yet effectively, written, although Hawke insists: "I have no ownership over any of these stories . . . I really view myself as the editor of this; anything that's valuable in this didn't come from me."

The handsome, palm-sized book is bound in emerald cloth and each chapter features whimsical pencil drawings done by his wife, Ryan Hawke.

Each chapter explores one of 20 virtues by telling a parable, sharing what the knight learned as he grew from a young apprentice into adulthood.

The stories are based on wisdom from "other knights" Hawke credits in the back of the book — among them Muhammad Ali, Vince Lombardi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Boyhood and Before Sunrise trilogy director Richard Linklater and late actor River Phoenix.

Like the knight in the book, Hawke has four children: daughter Maya, 17, and son Levon, 13, with ex-wife Uma Thurman and daughters Clementine, 7, and 4-year-old Indiana with wife Ryan Hawke.

He liked to use these stories to spark conversations with his kids about rules and behaviours.

"They're hard conversations to have, and part of it for me, doing a lot of my parenting from the handicapped vantage point of a divorcee . . . I'd be apart from the kids," Hawke explained.

"I have them every other weekend and there are all these things I wanted to talk about and they never come up on their own."

Establishing clarity and consistency around basic rules means less confusion for his children. But kids also ask "why?"

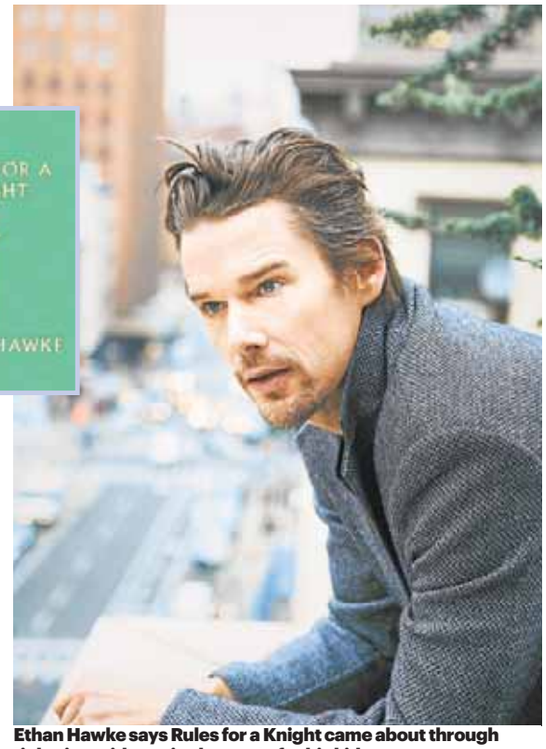
And Hawke used the knight's stories to provide real-life examples about difficult-to-define qualities such as humility and grace.

"That's what it was for me and that's the reason to publish it," Hawke explained.

"I'm an actor. I don't have to have a real job and this is something I can do with my time that's been fun over the past 10 years or so."

The book concludes with an epic poem, The Ballad of the Forty-Four Pointed Deer, which Hawke said was inspired by the story of the Buddha's life as a banyan deer taken from India's Jataka Tales.

"I love the poem and I'm happy about it but the heart of that poem is old text," Hawke said. "The message of that poem is way beyond me." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Ethan Hawke says Rules for a Knight came about through tinkering with stories he wrote for his kids. HANDOUT

5 CLASSIC MUST-WATCH CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

Brian Gasparek
For Metro Canada

If you haven't had a chance to kick back with a glass of spiked eggnog and stream Bill Murray's new holiday Netflix special, A Very Murray Christmas, you're totally missing out.

The show is not only as captivatingly bonkers as you would expect from a Bill Murray and friends holiday extravaganza, it also pays a great homage to all of the classic Christmas variety specials from television's past. Especially the really weird ones.

Dating back to the late '50s, celebrity-hosted Christmas specials were a huge draw on TV every winter. They featured singing, dancing, lovable guest stars, and some questionably thin holiday-themed plotlines. The popularity of these specials lasted several decades, and a handful of them still remain notorious today.

Whether it's because of their festive nostalgia, their utter ridiculousness or their disastrous legacy, here are 5 classic Christmas TV specials that you really need to go back and watch.

1 Pee-wee's Playhouse Christmas Special

Pee-Wee Herman's Christmas special from 1988 is an absolute must watch. The show combines the nostalgic singing and dancing from classic '60s holiday specials with the weekly weirdness that was Pee-wee's Playhouse. Along with Herman himself, the special features all of Pee-wee's bizarre Playhouse friends like Chairy, Cowboy Curtis and Charo. The strange cast interacts and performs with a solid line-up of '80s special guests that include Cher, Magic Johnson, Glen Close, Whoopi Goldberg and Oprah. The special is available on Netflix and should appeal to children, adults and stoners alike.

2 The Judy Garland Christmas Show

In the early '60s, The Judy Garland Christmas Show aired as a sweet, wholesome variety special that was fit for the entire family. But if you watch it now, it will completely floor you. The special, which took place just a few years before Garland died from a barbiturate overdose, was entirely sponsored by a pharmaceutical company!

3 Andy Williams and the NBC Kids Search for Santa

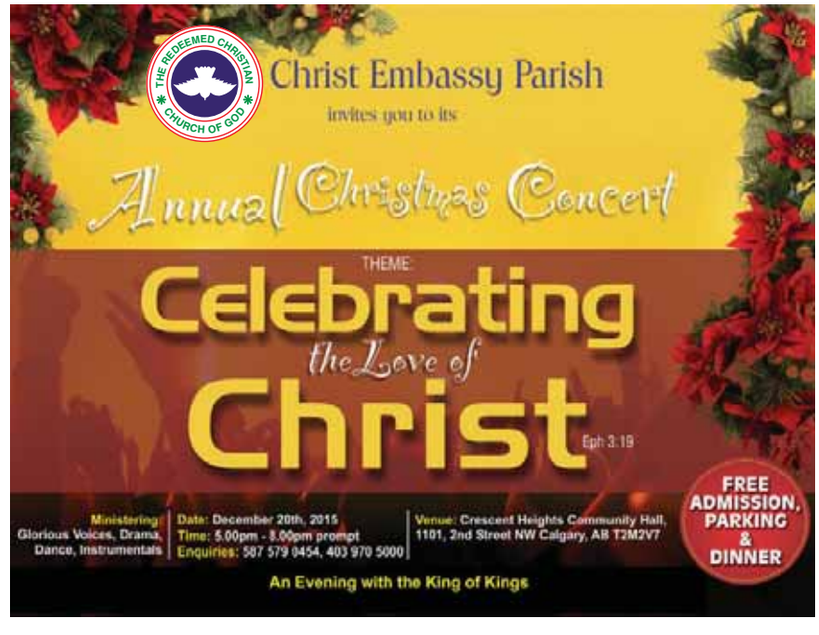
Speaking of baffling, the premise of Moon River singer Andy Williams' 1985 Christmas special was so unbelievably offside, it would never air today. The show features a 58-year-old Williams convincing several child actors from popular NBC sitcoms like The Cosby Show and Punky Brewster to run away with him to Finland.

4 Mr. T and Emmanuel Lewis in a Christmas Dream

If you want to see a special so atrociously bad it's good, you need to watch Mr. T and Emmanuel Lewis' Christmas Dream from the mid-'80s. Yes, at one point in history, Emmanuel Lewis and Mr. T were big enough stars to warrant having their own primetime Christmas special. Lewis, riding high on Webster fame, plays a kid who's lost all of his holiday spirit. Mr. T plays one of Santa's lackeys who attempts to restore Lewis' festive cheer. The singing is as terrible as you can imagine, and the special's one notable guest, magician David Copperfield, comes across as a creep. It's a cheesy train wreck, but you can't look away. You can find clips of it on YouTube.

5 The Star Wars Holiday Special

All of the hype surrounding The Force Awakens this month reminded us of the most ridiculous, must-see Christmas special of all time, The Star Wars Holiday Special from 1978. Yes, this actually exists and it's beyond weird. Although this special is more plot-driven than the others we mentioned, it's still intended to be a wholesome family variety show, and features singing, comedy and celebrity guests. The special revolves around a disgruntled-looking Star Wars cast attempting to get Chewbacca home to his family in time to celebrate 'Life Day.' Bea Arthur, Art Carney, Jefferson Starship and other guest stars all make very confusing appearances in what was a blatant Star Wars cash-grab. It's so much of a mess that even George Lucas says he hates it! Look it up on YouTube.



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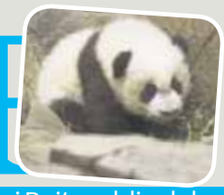

Smithsonian National Zoo readies for baby panda Bei Bei's public debut

A cultural getaway to Montreal

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is putting the spotlight on the Beaver Hall Group, a female artist ensemble based in the city in the 1920s. KATHY BUCKWORTH/FOR METRO

IN 48 HOURS

Art, history and French-inspired flavours await in dynamic city

Kathy Buckworth
For Metro Canada

Montreal has an international reputation for fabulous cuisine, fantastic shopping and fine arts. You only need spend 48 hours to get a taste of this trendy and growing city, which has rightfully earned a UNESCO City of Design designation.

Day 1

In the heart of the city you'll find the Golden Square Mile, running from Avenue Atwater to rue Saint-Denis, world-famous for its concentration of art boutiques. Start your day with the city's best-known "power breakfast" hot spot, Le Renoir at the Sofitel Hotel. Walk a few scenic blocks down the street to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The wonderfully curated "Colours of Jazz" exhibition runs until Jan. 31, featuring the unique brushstrokes of the predominantly female artist ensemble the Beaver Hall Group, who painted in a Modernist style in the 1920s.

Lunch at the café at the museum is both French and modern fusion inspired; blood pudding, Moroccan octopus and seasonal fare are just some of the elegantly plated feature dishes. Save room for the exotic assortment of desserts.

Le Renoir restaurant at the Sofitel Hotel. SOFITEL PR

Put your power shoes on to head out for an afternoon of shopping at some of the country's most exclusive shops, including Tiffany's, Gucci, Escada, and Montreal's own favourite department store, Simons.

Unload your shopping and head into Le Bar, a hopping bistro that attracts both young millennials and senior executives, featuring a line of apple-based Neige cider drinks and an eclectic bar menu, showcasing their famous charcuterie board and tasty local Quebec cheeses.

Day 2

Stop for a croissant at one of the many aromatic bistros and bakeries on rue Sainte-Catherine, before heading for your next museum hit at the McCord Museum, which specializes in the preservation of Canadian history, as well as offering fun and educational children's programming. Want to feel like a lady who lunches? Be one by dropping into the Holt Renfrew lunchroom, and linger over a drink before planning your next shopping move.

Relax in your room at the Sofitel and order an in-room spa treatment, or if you're looking for a true rural Quebec experience in the midst of your urban visit, head to La Face Cachée de la Pomme, an hour outside of Montreal, and the birthplace of ice cider. Extreme cold temperatures allow for the creation of this unique drink experience, and exemplifies what they call "Quebec culture in a bottle." Tours are available and their foie gras, made with ice cider, is a particular treat, perfect for the end of an artisanal- and action-packed two days.

Kathy Buckworth was a guest of the Sofitel Hotel, Montreal.

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3 WAYS TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR AROUND THE WORLD

Not many days from now, the planet will bid farewell to 2015 and welcome 2016 with open arms. We're taking a world tour of the big cities where New Year's is a major cause for celebration. Let's take a look at what's planned in London, New York and Rio de Janeiro. **AFP**

BEN STANSALL/AFP

1 London, U.K.

The U.K. capital celebrates New Year's on the banks of the River Thames, opposite the Palace of Westminster. Unfortunately, since 2014 visitors need a ticket to watch the spectacular fireworks show above Big Ben, a decision taken last year to ensure spectator safety. All the tickets have now been snapped up. The show begins at 5 p.m. and ends at 2 a.m.

The place to be: London Eye, The Queen's Walk

Watch it at home: Those unable to get a ticket will be able to watch the show on the BBC One TV channel, which broadcasts it live.

>> london.gov.uk

JEWEL SAMAD/AFP

2 New York, U.S.A.

The Big Apple is a must-do for those who want to celebrate 2016 in style. The entertainment is concentrated in Times Square where all the famous brightly lit billboards form part of the event. The lineup of performers this year include Carrie Underwood, Demi Lovato, Luke Bryan, and Wiz Khalifa with Charlie Puth.

The place to be: Times Square

Practical tips: It's better to arrive early to be sure to get a place and see the Times Square ball drop. It's advisable to take Sixth or Eighth Avenues to get to Times Square. The police close the adjacent roads.

>> timessquarenyc.org

GUSTAVO PELLIZZON/AG/AFP

3 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

New Year's in Rio is the second-biggest popular event in the city, after its mythical carnival. More than two million people attend. There's a firework display at midnight that lasts for around 20 minutes. This year the display and soundtrack will be themed around the Olympics, set to take place in August 2016 in the city.

The place to be: Copacabana Beach

Safety precautions: It's better to wear shoes rather than sandals. As the celebrations take place on the beach and champagne will be flowing, there could be fragments of glass in the sand.

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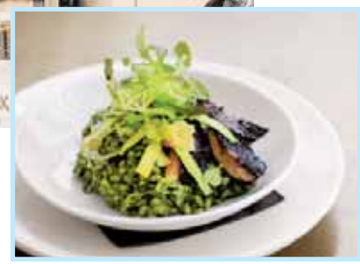
Local cuisine makes travel memorable

ON THE MOVE

From London to Peru, best cities for meals that excite

Loren Christie
For Metro Canada



The Farmshop bakery in L.A., and, at right, a dish at Nopi in London. SPENCER LOWELL; INSET: CONTRIBUTED

According to Christine Couvelier, a culinary consultant who watches global food trends, the best travel memoirs always include food memories.

I recently asked her about Travelocity.ca's list of the hottest destinations in culinary tourism and why these cities made the cut.

Montreal, Canada

This fabulous food city focuses on tradition and pride. Head to Schwartz's, offering the best smoked meat since 1928.

Visit the Atwater market where there is a store with more than 800 varieties of cheese. The Montreal bagels are hand-rolled, dipped in honey water and baked in a wood-fired oven. You can wander around in there for a whole afternoon.

Los Angeles, U.S.A.

One of the things happening in L.A. is the rising popularity of communal dining. A table or two offering a communal dining experience is becoming part of many destination restaurants.

Farmshop Santa Monica is a great spot to make some new foodie friends. Picture sharing a meal at a big wooden table in the middle of the restaurant surrounded by shelves stacked with gourmet food products.

Chicago, U.S.A.

With such a wide range of ethnicities represented in this city, dining in Chicago is a marathon, not a sprint. The food community in this city is focusing on the combinations of sweet and heat. Head to Topolobampo with Chef Rick Bayless, the leading Mexican chef in all of North America. Have the achiote-marinated suckling pig, it's wrapped in banana leaves. I love the poached papaya on the side.

London, England

One of the biggest trends is vegetables as the star of the plate and there is no better place than London, England, to really taste this trend.

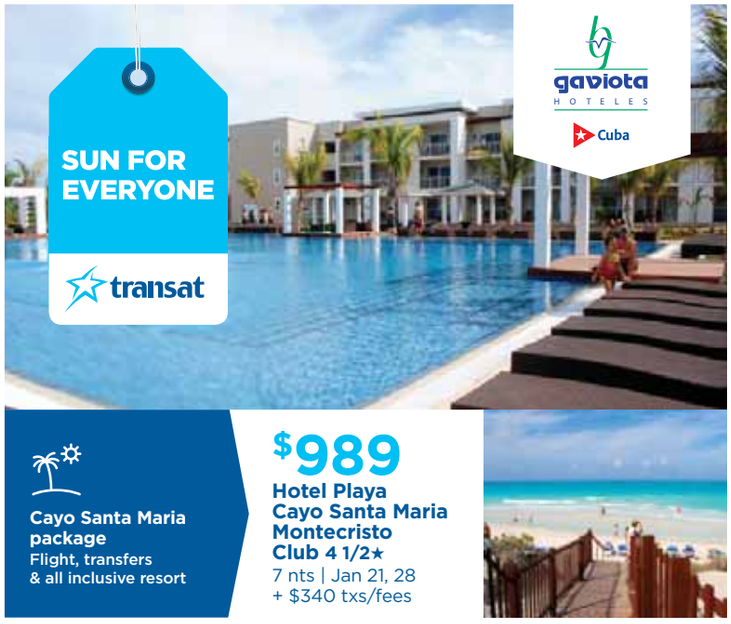
Be inspired by Chef Yotam Ottolenghi (Ottolenghi, Nopi), known for his vegetarian Mediterranean cuisine.

Head to one of the great produce markets. I love markets. You see what the locals are purchasing and how their day-to-day lives rotate around the market area.

Lima, Peru

A culinary tour is fabulous but a chocolate tour is even better, and there is a great focus on the origin of chocolate in Lima. A chocolate museum and numerous chocolate boutiques allow you to experience the nuances in the different flavours of chocolate.

On a side note, one restaurant not to miss is Central. It is considered one of the best restaurants in the world with a menu that focuses on tastes in four parts; mountain, sea, desert and jungle.



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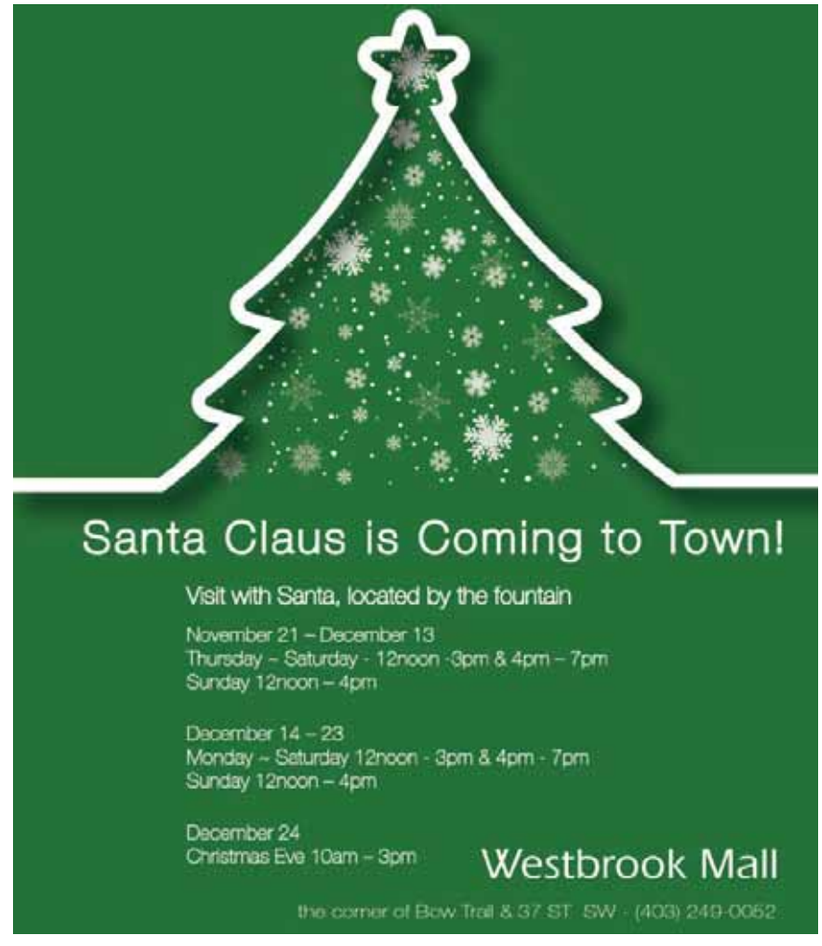

TRAVEL NOTES GALAXY QUEST, SANTA'S ROOTS

Adventure sharing
Startup tour company Embark is a booking site with a difference: It's an adventure-sharing platform that lets you create, share and book adventures around the world with other like-minded adventurous people. The growing network of local guides is ready to take you skiing, hiking, ice climbing, camping, kayaking or fly fishing, person to person. Visit Embark.org.

The world is your oyster. STOCKSNAP

Space on Earth
You can actually visit the barren lands seen in Star Wars: Episode VII. Filmmakers chose the sand dunes of Abu Dhabi to shoot the desert scenes, in particular the Empty Quarter desert, which has the world's largest uninterrupted sand mass. Insight Vacations offers a four-day stopover in Dubai that includes a four-wheel drive trek into Abu Dhabi and its nearby sandy film set. Visit InsightVacations.com.

Episode VII stars the dunes of Abu Dhabi. CONTRIBUTED

Santa's hometown
While the folklore spans multiple cultures, the Turkish seaside town of Demre lays claim to being the birthplace of St. Nicholas in 270 AD. He was known for his charity and secret gift-giving to the poor. Visitors can see frescoes depicting the saint's life and work in the Church of St. Nicholas, a solid example of Byzantine architecture. Visit GoTurkey.com. DOUG WALLACE

The Church of St. Nicholas in Demre, Turkey. CONTRIBUTED

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Don't exchange 'bugs' this holiday season

ISTOCK

The holiday season is one of giving. But when it comes to illness, that's a gift no one wants to give or receive — and there are some steps you can take to minimize the risk.

Two of the biggest sources of illness are respiratory and gastrointestinal maladies. And as family gathers around for a Christmas dinner or a holiday celebration, there are plenty of opportunities to pass on some unwanted 'bugs.'

"It's not just flu season, but it's also norovirus season," explained Dr. Joanna Oda, medical officer of health, Edmonton Zone, for the Alberta Health Services. "One of the best ways to prevent illness is frequent handwashing, especially with young children."

And if you're having the family over for turkey but are feeling a little under the weather, it may be time to hand over the baster and focus on getting better. "If you're feeling sick, it's better to defer cooking to someone who's feeling well," she said.

Ensuring that food is properly cooked to the appropriate temperature is a great starting point, but there's more you need to do.

"Food should be kept at an appropriate temperature and then refrigerated promptly — not just left out," Oda explained. "Typically, most leftovers should be eaten within three days.

"You can take this opportunity to spread the leftovers around to friends and family."

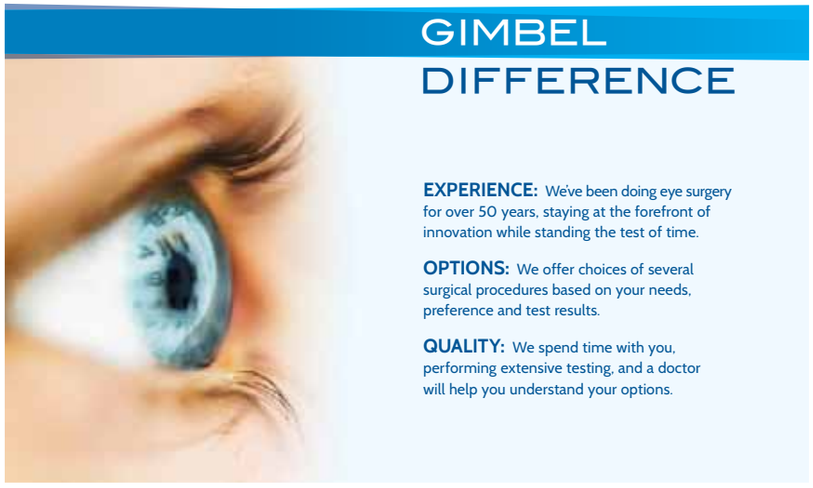
Of course, getting the flu shot also helps. "It's still useful now," she said. "It takes about two weeks to be effective, but we continue to offer it late into the season."

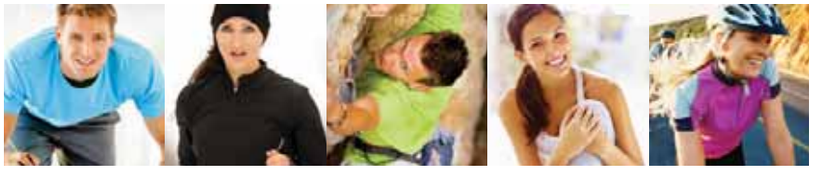
And it's important to know that some illnesses are more challenging to see than others. Mental illness is always a focus during the holidays and depression is always a concern during the festive season.

"There are those who do find the holidays a stressful time and may have conflicted feelings about family, but they can't avoid them during the holidays," Oda said. "Or there are those who don't have family and are alone during the holidays and this may be why we see an increased number of calls to support centres.

"There are also seniors and elderly who may be isolated, especially if they're unable to drive anymore."

It's important to ensure that people know there is help. "There is support here, through family physicians, calling 811, and the Addiction and Mental Health help line (1-866-332-2322)," she said, adding that if you have concerns about a loved one, there are steps you can take. "Absolutely, it's always a good thing to reach out." — *Jason Menard*





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Top-notch procedures and consistent innovation has led Gimbel Eye Centre to a rare feat of providing 50 years of quality eye service to Albertans.

It's a rare accomplishment but the special milestone is the result of outstanding patient care and technological advancement, according to Gimbel's Chief Operating Officer Gregg Becker.

"Our world-class procedures and innovation has propelled us forward as leaders in the provision of safe, high-quality and cost-effective eye surgery," Becker says, adding that the teams combine for over 500 years of experience."

Gimbel provides a thorough assessment process, taking the time and tests needed to ensure they provide the best options for each of their patients. The centres use all-laser technologies for refractive surgery, which provides the safest results and great vision at prices that are always competitive.

"Our surgeons began practicing in the areas of cataract and refractive laser surgery when the field was relatively new, and are well known world-wide as innovators in surgical practice, and the procedures they pioneered are now common across the industry," Becker adds.

Gimbel Eye Centre has recently added a new procedure called KAMRA Inlay to help restore near vision.

"It's used to help patients reduce or eliminate their use of reading glasses. This has been done widely in other parts of Canada and the world, but is relatively new in Western Canada."

For more information, please visit www.gimbel.com.

Affordable options for hair loss

With the winter months here, it's the perfect time to give your hair a little extra attention.

Hair loss affects both men and women, and the effects can be felt more in the winter. But there are treatments that can help alleviate or rectify hair loss, including new cutting edge men's hair replacement options.

There are beneficial treatments available to battle hair loss, according to Hair Restoration Services (HRS) owner Arlene Forster, who says hair replacement is a non-surgical and natural looking way to have a full head of hair within hours.

"We help people look and feel their best so that they can restore, repair and rejuvenate themselves," she says. "While 80 per cent of our clients are men, women actually suffer from hair loss, too."

Forster is excited to share the latest advancements in men's hair replacement, with state-of-the-art hair options, including Ultra-Thin cuti one and two, which, she says,

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is affordable while appearing completely natural.

"Each hair is placed into the transparent thin skin hair base with a new state-of-the-art injection method, which makes it look like the hair is growing directly from your scalp. One major benefit of this service is you can avoid costly monthly payments by paying as you go."

Ultra -Thin Skin Hair Systems can be cut as needed, and is the most flexible hair base when it comes to styling hair. HRS also offers skin tightening and hair removal services.

JIAN PAI SKIN CREAM A NATURAL HEALER

Skin disorders are a common occurrence for many Canadians, and there are many products available to battle those conditions. But none have more advantages than using Jian Pai Natural Skin Healer with a NPN issued by Health Canada.

The skin cream can benefit many different types of skin disorders, including eczema, and the major advantage of this product is it is 100 per cent natural, according to Montreal-based distributor Canada Orient International Trade's spokesperson M Chen.

"There are a lot of products on the market that can help skin conditions, but many of them have hormones in them that may produce side effects in many users," Chen says.

"But this product is 100 per cent natural and derived from four natural herbs, so there are no side effects with using this product and the product can cure many skin conditions."

This product has been well known in

CONTRIBUTED

China. Canada Orient International Trade has been distributing the product in Canada for nearly three years now, Chen adds.

"Jian Pai cream helps heal or reduce eczema long term and it can be used on the face without risk," he says. "This cream is suitable for everyday use and is effective for most skin problems by applying only once."

Get the most at the last minute

Last-minute holiday shopping can be overwhelming, so experts say it's important to remain thoughtful and find those rare times when malls aren't too crowded. ISTOCK

SHOPPING

It's not too late to find great Christmas gifts

Astrid Van Den Broek

Of course. You waited too long to snag that Dr. Who Tardis adult onesie and now they're all sold out. Now what are you going to get your sister? And when are you going to tackle the rest of your Christmas shopping?

Not to worry — we asked these top shopping bloggers for their best tips on approaching the last-minute Christmas shop.

Stay cool

"Christmas shopping can get overwhelming, especially if you've left it late, so take a minute first to really think of creative or thoughtful gifts to give your loved ones," says Tiffany Anthonia, the blogger behind shopaholicoverhere.blogspot.com.

Plan your shopping

Write down your list of who to shop for and check it twice. "And try to shop at stores that have a variety of product categories to save time when you have an entire list to shop for," adds Anthonia. If you can, also opt for low-traffic shopping times — think during the week as soon as the mall or stores open rather than wading into after-work, rush-hour shopping.

Set your limits

"I'm a fan of the 'do it all at once' approach," says Anne Keery, of UniqueGifter.com. "But if this is a source of stress, give yourself reasonable constraints, like 'Everything needs to come from this mall in the next three hours.' Setting boundaries for yourself can make things a lot less worrisome."

Make alternative arrangements

Your "it" item is out of stock online? "If the retailer has a brick-and-mortar location, see if the item is available in-store because most major retailers like Best Buy, Toys "R" Us and Walmart offer free in-store pickup.

> **Don't grab the first thing you see just because you're on a time crunch.**
> Tiffany Anthonia
> Shopping Blogger

This way you can buy the item online, then get an email within an hour or two when it's ready to be picked up in-store," says Kyle James, founder of rather-be-shopping.com.

Get creative

Or try posting a "Wanted" ad for your must-have item on classified sites such as Craigslist and Kijiji, and also check eBay.

"Alternatively, give a card with the name of the gift and a future delivery date," says Keery.

Or use that gift idea as inspiration. "At least you know what gift direction you wanted to go, so find a gift that's either similar or complementary of that gift you had in mind," says Anthonia. "You might come across an even better gift."

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Light up the eyes of gamers

Marc Saltzman

Nintendo's Yoshi's Woolly World

Star Wars Battlefront

Bethesda Softworks' Fallout 4

'Tis the season to be jolly, and what better way to keep the kids — and kids at heart — happy than with a brand new video game.

If it's console and computer gamers you're shopping for, the following are some thumb-numbing suggestions. Prices are generally $49.99 to $74.99, depending on the platform. Be sure to check the ESRB age-rating in the corner of the box before buying.

Kids

Most games let you play content created by other people, but Nintendo's Super Mario Maker (for Nintendo Wii U) also lets you design, create and share your very own Super Mario adventures. Along with the 60-odd playable Nintendo-made levels, the game includes tools to make two-dimensional platforming levels based on previous Super Mario games.

As you might suspect, you'll mostly run from the left side of the screen to the right, leap across platforms, break open power-ups, climb into pipes, and jump on enemies to destroy them. After you've designed a world, play it through, hand the controller to a sibling or friend, or upload to the online community. You can download other creations, too.

One of the world's hottest kids' franchises is getting a reboot. Activision's Skylanders SuperChargers (for multiple platforms) once again fuses action figures with a video game — the toys come alive on the television screen when placed on the Portal of Power, which is connected to the console — but now there's collectible vehicles added to the mix. Players can tackle missions by land, sea and air, in a number of customizable and upgradeable vehicles, including cars, motorcycles, boats, tanks, helicopters and submarines. The game also introduces 20 new Skylanders characters, but parents will be relieved to learn the game also supports all existing Skylanders characters.

Other kids' games that won't disappoint: Nintendo's Yoshi's Woolly World, Disney's Disney Infinity 3.0, WB Games' LEGO: Dimensions, and Sony's Tearaway Unfolded.

Teens

Launching just ahead of the film Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens, Star Wars Battlefront from DICE and Electronic Arts (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Windows PC) drops players into intense intergalactic battles based in iconic Star Wars locations — such as the snowy planet of Hoth — pitting Rebel forces against the Empire.

Along with playing as characters based on the original movie trilogy, you'll pilot beloved vehicles, as well, ranging from AT-ATs and TIE fighters to speeder bikes and even the Millennium Falcon. The game includes many online multiplayer modes and mission types for dozens of simultaneous players.

Guitar Hero is back after a five-year hiatus and it's nothing short of ambitious. Along with single-player and local multiplayer options, Activision's Guitar Hero Live (for multiple platforms) introduces a mode called GHTV, an always-on 24-hour music video network that lets you log on, strap in and strum to a continually updated collection of music videos and concert footage. That is — instead of the cartoon-like animated bands from previous games — you can rock out to your favorite artists and discover new music, while challenging others for high score.

Other recommended games for teens: Sony's Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection, EA Sports' NHL 16, and Activision's Destiny: The Taken King.

Adults

One of the most buzzed about games of the year, Bethesda Softworks' Fallout 4 (Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Windows PC), is the long-awaited return to the beloved single-player, open-world, role-playing game series. The follow-up to 2008's Fallout 3 lets you choose to play as a male or female and select a specific set of skills, and then venture out of a vault 200 years after an apocalyptic event. Played from a first- or third-person perspective, you can freely roam around huge environments, interface with memorable characters and gain access to more than 50 base weapons and more than 700 modifications. Plus, gamers can take advantage of a deep crafting system to create unique adventures.

The next installment of the legendary sci-fi shooter franchise, Halo 5: Guardians, is the built to showcase the power of Xbox One. Complementing its intense storyline — which can be run with three friends in a cooperative (co-op) mode — this new game focuses heavily on competitive multiplayer. One mode called Warzone challenges up to 24 players to battle on the biggest maps in Halo to date, while taking on multiple objectives including big boss battles, with land and air craft to aid in the fight.

Other worthy games for adults: Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed: Syndicate, CD Projekt Red's The Witcher 3: Witch Hunt, Activision's Call of Duty: Black Ops III, Microsoft Studios/Crystal Dynamics' Rise of the Tomb Raider, and Konami's Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain.

Capture this season's memories with a Canon EOS Rebel T5i DSLR.

The EOS Rebel T5i is here to renew your artistic side with amazing imaging features and full-featured functionality. Users will be impressed at how simple and intuitive it is to create breathtaking photos with ease. The incredible image quality and performance starts with an 18.0 Megapixel CMOS (APS-C) sensor and Canon's superb DIGIC 5 Image Processor. Combined with an extensive ISO range of 100-12800 (expandable to 25600 in H mode), the EOS Rebel T5i boasts crisp, detailed images, even in low-light situations.

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*By unit and dollar shares, as sourced through the NPD Group's Retail Tracking Service from October 2008 to August 2015 for the Digital SLR Camera category in the Canadian market.

Consoles that make the gift list

1

Mike Yawney

It doesn't matter how young or old you are; video games continue to be a dominant pastime. While no new gaming consoles launched this year, some unique limited edition bundles did surface. Here are the top picks for those looking to surprise a gamer on their gift list.

Xbox One Limited Edition Halo 5: Guardians Console - $549

There is no denying the Halo franchise is a force to be reckoned with, so it comes as no surprise Microsoft is releasing this limited edition Xbox One console for the holidays.

2

The design of the console itself is inspired by Spartan technology and has a massive 1 TB hard drive to store your games and media. The wireless controller also sees a redesign with a new 3.5-mm headset jack. Other bonus items include a Spartan-themed SteelBook case with Halo 5: Guardians Limited Edition full game download, a Guardian model and exclusive downloadable content.

Star Wars Battlefront PlayStation 4 Console - $469.99

The ultimate PlayStation bundle for any Star Wars fan, this unique console bears the image of Darth Vader's mask, while the DualShock wireless controller is designed after his chest panel. Not only does this come with the highly anticipated Star Wars Battlefront game, it also includes four additional classic Star Wars games to keep even the best gamers busy over the holidays.

New Nintendo 3DS XL - $229.99

3

Nintendo's latest handheld console features not only a larger screen for more immersive gameplay, but new technology. Super stable 3D allows for a better experience and wider range of viewing angles. The handheld device also features built-in NFC functionality for communication with Nintendo's new Amiibo figures.

1 Xbox One Limited Edition Halo 5: Guardians Console, $549
2 New Nintendo 3DS XL, $229.99
3 Star Wars Battlefront PlayStation 4 Console, $469.99

Give the gift of giving to others

Ylva Van Buuren

Could there be anything more satisfying than finding the perfect gift for those you love? Absolutely! Knowing that the gifts are doing good for others, too. Here are some gift ideas that keep on giving.

Agriculture Pack

A World Vision Agriculture Pack provides seeds, animal feed, tools, training and emergency food to families in need. It costs $35, but partnerships with the Canadian government and various companies and agencies double the value to $70. Visit worldvision.ca/gifts.

1

Charity Gift Cards

When you wrap up a CanadaHelps gift card, the recipient gets to choose which charity to support. There are more than 86,000 registered charities with CanadaHelps ranging from local health and arts and culture to environmental and social services charities. Gift cards start at $5. Visit canadahelps.org.

Help Syrian Refugees

There are many ways to help a Syrian family coming to Canada. Check in your community to see if a family is being sponsored, make a donation or volunteer your time or services. There is also the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. Visit charityintelligence.ca/syrian-refugees.

TOMS Slippers

Women's White Gold Boucle Slippers are a perfect holiday gift. Plus, for every pair of TOMS shoes you buy, the company provides a new pair of shoes to children in need. To date, the company has given more than 45 million new pairs of shoes to children around the world. $55/pair. Visit toms.ca or select retailers across Canada.

Shop for Hope

From the exclusive Shop for Hope collection at Winners and HomeSense, the net proceeds from the sale of the Plush Owl go to the Canadian Women's Foundation. $14.99/each. Available at Winners, winners.ca and HomeSense, homesense.ca.

3

Gift with a Gift

Choose a gift at Indigo such as the Fair Isle Socks with Faux-Sherpa Lining, and keep the gift going by donating to the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation at the cashier. The charity puts books into the hands of high-needs elementary school children. $34.50/pair. Visit Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.

4

Help Free the Children

All artisans gifts purchased from Me to We help Free the Children communities overseas. A Ghanaian Brass Halo Necklace, for example, gives a woman access to a prenatal workshop. A Rafiki, made with colourful glass beads threaded onto a stretchy 48-inch cord and worn as a bracelet, necklace, etc., helps educate a child for one year. Necklace, $32, Rafiki, $10. Visit shop.metowe.com.

5

Angels for Angels

Goods sold by Ten Thousand Villages are made by artisans in marginalized communities around the world, and every purchase helps those communities. At the same time, $2 from every purchase of the handcrafted Capiz Angel ornament from the Philippines will help fund Breakfast for Learning, the first national charity focused on nourishing Canadian children. Ornament, $20. Visit tenthousandvillages.ca or select retailers across Canada.

2

Help At-Risk Youth

Until Dec. 31, $5 from the sale of every Samsung Galaxy Grand Prime purchased from Virgin Mobile will go towards the company's RE*Generation program that helps connect at-risk and homeless youth with training, skills and opportunities for employment.

The slim-line phone with 1.2 GHz Quad Core processor, long-lasting battery and 5 MP camera is $249 (price varies depending on the plan). Purchase it at Virgin Mobile retail and virginmobile.ca. Virgin Mobile members can also participate by adding 'Change for a Dollar' to their monthly phone bill to donate $1/month to the cause. Members and Canadians can also text the word REGEN to 30333 to donate $5 to the RE*Generation program.

LA-RS Bracelets

Modeled after the Cartier love bracelets, these ONEXONE bracelets benefit the onexone.org charity and help feed children a healthy meal. Each set comes with four colours to represent various human races.

Join celebrities Chandler Parsons, Rita Ora, Diplo, Marcus Stroman, Hailey Baldwin and others... and try them on for size. $30, visit la-rs.org.

Help WWF

Adopt a Spirit Bear for $40 and help the World Wide Fund for Nature protect the species. You'll receive a kit containing a plush bear, adoption certificate, poster and reusable WWF tote bag.

There are more than 30 different species to choose from. Visit shop.wwf.ca.

6

1 World Vision Agriculture Pack, $35
2 Ten Thousand Villages Capiz Angel ornament, $20
3 TOMS White Gold Boucle Slippers, $55
4 Indigo Fair Isle Socks, $34.50
5 Me to We Rafiki, $10
6 World Wide Fund for Nature Spirit Bear, $40

WHICH NIKON ARE YOU?

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Gift giving the Canadian way, eh?

Todd Lewys

Whether it's a family member, friend or work associate, we all know someone who's wild about all things Canadian.

Here's a quick snapshot of some gifts sure to please the person in your life who's a connoisseur of Canadiana.

HBC Olympic 2016 Collection Mittens ($12) and Toque ($25)
While wrapping yourself in the Canadian flag is heartwarming, it can't keep you warm on cold winter days. A pair of Olympic Collection 2016 mittens and an Olympic Collection Canada marled toque, however, can. Combine them in a gift box, or use them as stocking stuffers. Available at Hudson Bay Company, thebay.com.

Roots Women's Maple Gloves ($48)
On frigid days, it's imperative to keep your digits in working order, so why not bless the woman in your life with a gift that looks great and will keep her hands from becoming ice blocks on frigid days: a pair of functional — and fashionable — women's maple gloves. Available at Roots, roots.com.

Roots Men's Lumberjack Boot Sock ($16.50/pair)
Patriots will love this gift — a pair of thick, cozy socks emblazoned with a maple leaf that come in red, white or blue trim with another Canadian classic — a snow-capped mountain scene. Available at Roots, roots.com.

Gap Men's Onesie ($69.95)
Shoveling the driveway or digging out the car after a howling blizzard is a daunting task for even the hardiest Canadian male. This warm thermal onesie will provide him with the protection required to keep muscles warm and limber as they churn their way through the snow. Available at Gap, gapcanada.ca.

Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Bacon Scented Soap ($6.99)
There's nothing much more Canadian than the smell of bacon, so why not bring it from the kitchen into the bathroom. It may not be the scent you think of when taking a shower, but it sure does reek Canada ... and yes, it really does smell like bacon! Available at thegreatcanadiangiftcompany.com.

Zazzle.ca's Grunge Canadian Flag Red Maple Leaf Courier Bag ($139)
This is the perfect gift for those who bleed red and white and love to lug an extra sweater and other paraphernalia around: a cool courier bag with shoulder strap, copious carrying capacity — and, most importantly, a red maple leaf and CANADA stenciled boldly on its front flap. Available at zazzle.ca.

Gap Women's Cable Knit Turtleneck ($59.95)
Cold Canadian winter days call for extreme measures to stay warm. This cable knit turtleneck is not only festive, but provides a layer of warmth that envelopes the torso and neck. Available at Gap, gapcanada.ca.

Banana Republic Men's Plaid Shirt ($85)
This shirt is a great choice on during the holiday season. Not only is it festive, but it evokes the classic Canadian lumberjack look — and, it helps keep you warm on sub-zero days. Available at Banana Republic, bananarepublic.ca.

Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Flag Placemat ($13.99)
There's no better way to show pride in your country than placing a Lady Rosedale Canadian flag placemat across your home's threshold. Available at thegreatcanadiangiftcompany.com.

Zazzle.ca's Red Autumn Canadian Maple Leaf Throw Pillow ($39.65)
This throw pillow is an accent piece that will add just the right touch of patriotic flavour — and colour — to a living room, den, rec room or cottage. Available at zazzle.ca.

1 Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Flag Placemat ($13.99)
2 Banana Republic Men's Plaid Shirt ($85)
3 Zazzle.ca's Red Autumn Canadian Maple Leaf Throw Pillow ($39.65)
4 Great Canadian Gift Company's Canadian Bacon Scented Soap ($6.99)
5 Roots Men's Lumberjack Boot Sock ($16.50/pair)
6 HBC Olympic 2016 Collection Mittens ($12)

metro SPORTS

Cleveland Cavaliers guard Iman Shumpert calmly delivered his daughter when his fiancée unexpectedly went into labour in their bathroom

Full face shields still unwelcome

NHL

Despite latest gory Hamhuis scene, visors are still preferred

The gruesome sight of Dan Hamhuis on the ice with his legs flailing made fellow NHL players cringe. A shot like the one that cracked the Vancouver Canucks defenceman in the face could happen to anyone.

Hamhuis is out two months after surgery to repair facial fractures. Even though he wears a visor like a vast majority of the league now, it couldn't save him when a slap shot from the New York Rangers' Dan Boyle hit him in the jaw from close range.

Only a full face shield or cage could have prevented that injury. The league and Players' Association only two years ago mandated visors for incoming players, but there could be a day in the distant future when full facial protection like in youth, college and women's hockey, is commonplace in the NHL.

"It's probably the next step," San Jose Sharks coach Peter DeBoer said. "No one thought helmets were coming in and they did, and then no one thought visors were coming in and they did. I'm sure there will be a day down the road one day here where it is (normal)."

> **I think it's a ways off. It'll get here one day.**
> Sharks coach Peter DeBoer

Canucks coach Willie Desjardins said recently that "you forget how vicious the game is sometimes" and recalled Hamhuis experiencing a near miss of a puck whizzing by his visor two games earlier.

"That happens on a regular basis and it's probably surprising that maybe more guys don't get hit," Desjardins said.

Current players are conflicted on the subject but are in agreement that full face shields aren't coming any time soon. Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman Matt Hunwick called the Hamhuis injury a "freak accident," even if similar plays happen often.

Go into any locker-room and there are a handful of players who remember losing teeth or breaking bones from an errant stick or a puck. It's basically the only way anyone in the NHL now puts on a full face shield.

Philadelphia Flyers forward Sam Gagner, who recently suffered a concussion when his head hit the ice, remembers breaking his jaw in 2013 and was no fan of wearing the full shield.

"It hinders you," Gagner said. "Your vision of the puck, it throws that off a bit."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

FLAMES SHOOT DOWN STARS Flames goaltender Karri Ramo makes a save in front of the Stars' Cody Eakin on Thursday in Dallas. Ramo made 35 saves as the Flames earned a 3-1 win. Sean Monahan and Dougie Hamilton scored first-period goals for Calgary, while Mason Raymond rounded out the scoring for the victors in the second. RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Quick withstands Habs' barrage

Jonathan Quick made a season-high 45 saves as the Los Angeles Kings shut out the Montreal Canadiens 3-0 on Thursday night.

The shutout was Quick's second of the season. Anze Kopitar, Drew Doughty and Marian Gaborik, in an empty net, scored for the Kings (20-9-2).

Mike Condon, who has now lost his last four starts, made 17 saves for Montreal (20-10-3).

The Canadiens have lost six of their last seven games, scoring just 11 goals over that stretch.

Quick was sensational throughout the game, as Montreal fired a season-high 45 pucks his way, including 18 in the first period.

The 29-year-old Quick stopped Tomas Plekanec with the glove late in the first, and denied Torrey Mitchell from point blank range in the second.

Quick really shone in the third — stopping 15 shots to preserve the shutout. He made an acrobatic stop at 2:30 to poke the puck off the goal-line after a shot by Habs captain Max Pacioretty. Minutes later, Quick made a pad save on Alex Galchenyuk on a breakaway.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

WILD WIN

Dubnyk victorious in return from groin strain

Devan Dubnyk made 21 saves in his return to action and Mikko Koivu had two goals and an assist for the Minnesota Wild in a 5-2 win over the New York Rangers on Thursday night. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SOCCER

Mourinho takes fall for Chelsea's nightmare start

Jose Mourinho's second tenure as Chelsea manager abruptly ended on Thursday with the team languishing just above the relegation zone only seven months after winning the Premier League.

Mourinho's dismissal comes 2-1/2 years after his return to Stamford Bridge and only four months into a new four-year contract

Jose Mourinho GETTY IMAGES

signed after winning his third league title with Chelsea. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Buchanan usurps Sinclair as Canada's top player

Kadeisha Buchanan had yet to reach double digits in age when Christine Sinclair started her run of 11 straight Canadian female player of the year awards in 2004.

Sinclair, who also won the award in 2000, is still the captain of the Canadian women's soccer team. But the 32-year-old's stranglehold on the top player award ended Thursday when Buchanan was voted BMO Player of the Year.

Kadeisha Buchanan GETTY IMAGES

"It's definitely quite a shock because obviously Christine has won it so many times," the 20-year-old defender who put her stamp on the world stage at the 2015 Women's World Cup, said. "It's obviously a great honour," she added. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NBA HORNETS STING RAPTORS IN OVERTIME Raptors' Kyle Lowry, right, goes for the lay up against Hornets' Jeremy Lin in Charlotte. The Hornets won 109-99. GETTY IMAGES

Thorpe's Als exit invalid

CFL

Orridge makes call to keep Eskimos-bound man in Montreal

Noel Thorpe's reported resignation as defensive co-ordinator of the Montreal Alouettes was declared invalid Thursday by the Canadian Football League.

A statement from commissioner Jeffrey Orridge said Thorpe cannot get out of his contract to join another club without written approval from the Alouettes. Thorpe was expected to accept the same job titles with Edmonton. Orridge placed a moratorium on the movement of coaches between teams on Wednesday after reports that Thorpe decided to leave the Alouettes to join the Eskimos, despite having two years left on his contract.

It prohibits coaches under contract signing with another club without his written approval.

The league statement said Orridge made "a thorough and complete investigation of the facts surrounding the Noel Thorpe matter and has determined that Thorpe's purported resignation from his contract with the Montreal Alouettes on Tuesday December 15, 2015 in order to secure a coaching position with the Edmonton Eskimos was invalid based on the terms of his contract with Montreal and the existing by-laws of the CFL".

Alouettes general manager Jim Popp said he expects Thorpe to fulfil the last two years of his contract. If not, he won't be able to work in the CFL. "He's under contract for three years and we expect him to fulfil that," said Popp." THE CANADIAN PRESS

MEDIATION

Ottawa offensive co-ordinator Jason Maas recently resigned to become head coach in Edmonton, and the Redblacks demanded compensation. Orridge has sent the matter to mediation.

PLAY Yesterday's Answers from your daily crossword and Sudoku

4	7	5	9	1	8	6	2	3
1	2	9	3	6	5	7	4	8
8	3	6	7	4	2	1	9	5
6	4	7	2	8	9	5	3	1
3	9	8	6	5	1	2	7	4
5	1	2	4	7	3	8	6	9
9	8	3	5	2	7	4	1	6
7	5	4	1	3	6	9	8	2
2	6	1	8	9	4	3	5	7

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games

RECIPE Mexican Egg Bake

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

A zesty tomato sauce punctuated with avocado and cilantro is the perfect bed for runny, baked eggs.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes
Serves 4

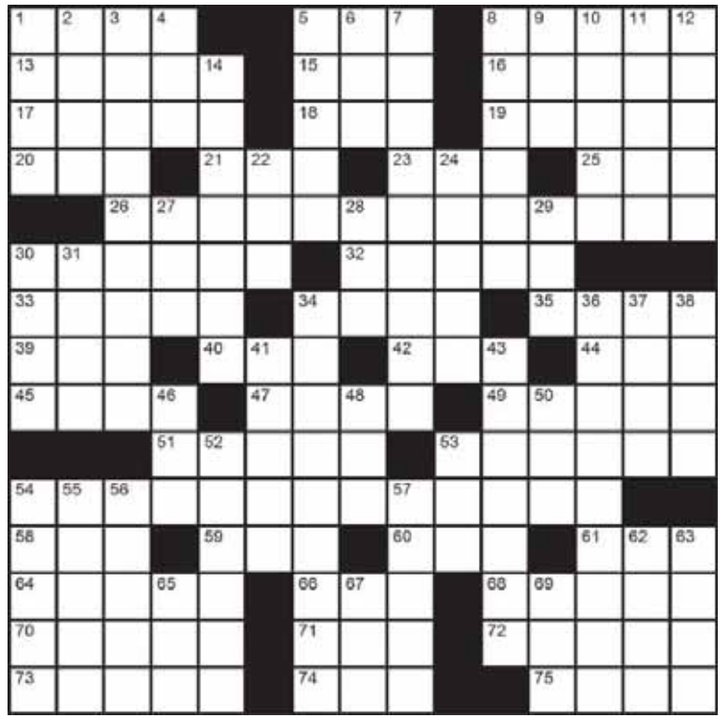
Ingredients
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp red pepper or cayenne
- 1 x 28 oz can tomatoes
- 1 x 14 oz can black beans, rinsed
- 5 eggs
- Small handful of cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 avocado, sliced
- 1/2 cup cheddar, grated
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a medium-sized skillet, warm olive oil and sauté the onion and garlic until they begin to soften. Add spices and stir; cook 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and black beans. Use the back of a wooden spoon to break up tomatoes. Simmer for about 15 or 20 minutes until sauce has thickened.
3. Gently crack the eggs on top of the sauce. Place skillet in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes, or until egg whites are cooked but yolks are runny.
4. Remove pan from oven and allow to cool a bit before placing on a trivet on the table. Scoop each serving gently, being sure to get an egg and a good amount of the bean sauce. Place extras — avocado, yogurt, cheese and cilantro — on table so everyone can DIY toppings.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Math instrument [abbr.]
5. Illuminated
8. 5th Dimension member Marilyn
13. Tropical greeting
15. Iron __
16. Green spaces for homes
17. Particular parrot
18. Nourished
19. Fix that squeak once more
20. Pitcher's stat.
21. Boat's stern
23. Nero's 511
25. Key: French
26. Character in #14-Down: 2 wds.
30. Fashion designer Ms. Johnson
32. Tolerate
33. Bird-like
34. "Tres _!"
35. High-five-to-high-five hit
39. Sleep state, commonly
40. Cardinals player's baseball cap letters
42. Actor's representative [abbr.]
44. Diminutive suffix
45. Was aware
47. Remorseful person
49. Britannica, e.g.
51. Not __ (Not so far)
53. Crowd reactions to corny jokes
54. Villains-in-white-armour in #14-Down
58. Left tap's meaning
59. Haunted house hooowl!
60. Feminine suffix
61. Lobster __ Diavolo (Seafood dish with pasta)
64. Book's beginning, briefly
66. "__ Have to Say the Words?" by Bryan Adams
68. Science fiction being
70. Clay pigeon shooting
71. 'Ether' suffix
72. It's often served with tongs
73. Abrasive
74. Sanctions, short-style
75. Gladiator's 951

DOWN
1. Arrived (b.1849 - d.1919)
2. Banned orchard spray
3. When a TV show airs regionally: 2 wds.
4. Repeated-word dance
5. Former factory living spaces
6. Wrath
7. Classic toy from Santa: 2 wds.
8. Immeasurable
9. Flight simulators co. headquartered in Saint-Laurent, QC
10. __-Pot (Slow cooker)
11. Wearer of the black tutu in Swan Lake
12. Canadian doctor, the 'Father of Modern Medicine', William __
14. "Star Wars: The Force __" (2015)
22. Tina of "Sisters" (2015)
24. Type of fighter craft in #14-Down, -_-
27. _ _ _ Today (American newspaper)
28. Trombonist Mr. Winding
29. __ Miserables
30. Tree trunk topping
31. All square
34. Canadian band that formed in 1984: 2 wds.
36. Production company behind #14-Down
37. Kirk __, "Superman" (1948) star
38. Bench press muscles, commonly
41. __ __ understand (Attempt at comprehending)
43. Nobel-winning Mother, and namesakes
46. Combat reason
48. Ike's WWII arena
50. Scand. land
52. Not lumpy or bumpy
53. Car's navigation aid, commonly
54. __ kebab
55. Toy truck brand
56. Furry mammal that can swim
57. Trompe l'__ (Visual illusions)
62. Authentic
63. "The King __ _" (1956)
65. Home addr.
67. Tree of acorns
69. Lake: French

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
If you haven't done anything marvellous yet don't worry because there is still time — just. Make your move this weekend, certainly before the Sun changes signs on the 22nd.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Changes are coming, changes that will enable you to move in a new, exciting direction when the Sun moves in your favour early next week. Do only what your heart tells you to.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Geminis are supposed to be daring. Geminis are supposed to take risks. So what happened? Life is meant to be a great adventure. Make today the day when you rediscover your true nature again.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
When the Sun moves into your opposite sign of Capricorn in a few days you'll be at the halfway point of your solar year. It's a good time to take stock of how far you've come.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
This is no time to slow down. There is a lot to be done before the Sun leaves the most dynamic area of your chart on the 2nd. Creatively, and romantically, there is no limit to what you can accomplish.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Don't waste time and energy on senseless disputes with people you don't respect. Focus on more important matters between now and when the Sun changes signs next Tuesday.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Your present course is taking you in the wrong direction and you're missing opportunities simply because you're too stubborn to admit it. There's still time to get back on track.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Stand up for your rights and don't let anyone tell you what you can and cannot do. What others don't seem to understand is that you cannot be bribed or pressured to go against your principles. Flattery, of course, is harder to defend against.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
The Sun remains in your sign a few more days, so make the most of it. Take every opportunity that comes your way and today can be special.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Recent weeks have been far from easy and there will be more challenges to come over the next few days. However, come Tuesday, when the Sun moves into your sign, things will start to get better in a big way.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Steer clear of other people's fights and feuds — there is nothing you can gain from them. If you stick your nose in where it is not wanted you're inviting someone to take a poke at it!

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
Once again you're allowing yourself to be dragged into situations that are not good for you. Make an effort to put distance between you and those who would use you.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

3						1		2
		5	9				3	
	7		6					9
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	8				6	2		
6		1						7

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JESUS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

There is an erroneous impression that Jesus wants to take away fun and other good things from our lives. This fallacy has no root because Jesus' mission on earth was to make a difference in our lives. He demonstrated this several times by healing the sick, providing for the poor, showing love and even taught us to love our enemies when He said, "But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6: 27 NLT).

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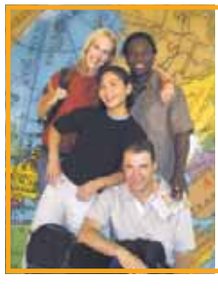

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EXCLUSIVE JEEP SALES EVENT

CALGARY'S ORIGINAL JEEP STORE HAS BEEN GIVEN A SPECIAL ALLOCATION OF JEEP WRANGLERS THAT MUST BE SOLD!

40 JEEP WRANGLERS AVAILABLE AT SPECIAL PRICING

2015 WRANGLER SAHARA 4-DOOR

LOADED WITH AUTO • NAV • ALPINE STEREO • BLUETOOTH • A/C AND MORE!

15J603

STARTING FROM

$35,990 | OR PAY $202 BIWEEKLY

GET THIS CHEROKEE NORTH 4X4 WITH 0% FINANCING FOR 72 MONTHS!

2015 JEEP CHEROKEE NORTH

LOADED! PANO ROOF • BACKUP CAM • REMOTE START!

15J745

$34,990 | OR PAY $193 BIWEEKLY

READY FOR WINTER WITH HEATED LEATHER SEATS AND MORE!

2015 COMPASS HIGH ALTITUDE

LOADED! SUNROOF • NAV • BOSTON ACOUSTICS STEREO • REMOTE START!

15J252

$25,990 | OR PAY $147 BIWEEKLY

CALGARY'S BEST 7 PASSENGER CROSSOVER DEAL!

2015 DODGE JOURNEY SXT

LOADED! NAV • REAR DVD • SUNROOF • BACKUP CAM • AND MORE!

15T545

$26,990 | OR PAY $152 BIWEEKLY

BIG4

THE SALVATION ARMY

THE WOOD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP IS A PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE CHRISTMAS KETTLE CAMPAIGN. WE WILL DONATE $100,000. PLEASE JOIN US IN OFFERING HOPE TO CALGARIANS. PLEASE VISIT WWW.WOODAUTO.CA FOR DETAILS.

WOOD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

CALGARY'S MOST-EXPERIENCED TEAM HAS THE ANSWERS!

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AMVIC LICENSED. ALL OFFERS OAC. ALL OFFERS INCLUDE FEES AND TAXES BUT EXCLUDE GST. BIWEEKLY PAYMENTS BASED ON 96 MONTH TERM @ 3.99% (PATRIOT), 3.49% (WRANGLER), 2..99% (CHEROKEE) WITH $0 DOWNPAYMENT. COB=$4,163.97 (16J030). ALL REBATES TO DEALER. VEHICLES MAY NOT BE EXACTLY AS SHOWN. INVENTORY ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION. LIMITED TIME OFFERS. SEE DEALER FOR DETAILS.

WOOD AUTOMOTIVE GROUP